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THE POEMS

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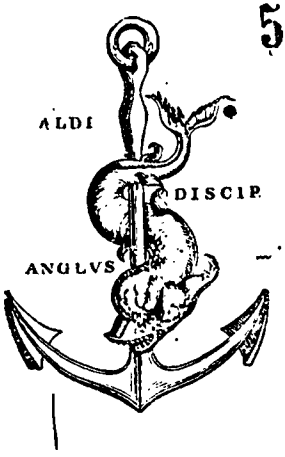
OF

THOMAS LOVELL BEDDOES

VOL. II.

52804



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——— δημαγωγεῖ
ἐν τοῖς ἄνω νεκροῖσι,
κἀστὶν τὰ πρῶτα τῆς ἐκεῖ μοχθηρίας.
* * * * *
Χωρῶμεν ἐς πολυρρόδους
λειμῶνας ἀνθεμώδεις,
τὸν ἡμέτερον τρόπον,
τὸν καλλιχορώτατον,
παίζοντες, ὃν ὅλβιαι
Μοῖραι ξυνάγουσιν.

ΜΟΝΟΙΣ ΓΑΡ ΗΜΙΝ ΗΛΙΟΣ
ΚΑΙ ΦΕΓΓΟΣ ΙΔΑΡΟΝ ΕΣΤΙΝ
ΟΣΟΙ ΜΕΜΥΗΜΕΘ'.

Χορος Μυστων.

PERSONS REPRESENTED.

MELVERIC; Duke of MUNSTERBERG.
ADALMAR; } His sons.
ATHULF; }
WOLFRAM; a knight. } Brothers.
ISBRAND; the court-fool. }
THORWALD; Governor in the Duke's absence.
MARIO; a Roman.
SIEGFRIED; a courtier.
ZIBA; an Egyptian slave.
HOMUNCULUS MANDRAKE; Zany to a mountebank.

SIBYLLA.
AMALA; Thorwald's daughter.
IOAN.

Knights, Ladies, Arabs, Priests, Sailors, Guards, and other attendants.
The Dance of Death.

SCENE; in the first act at Ancona, and afterwards in Egypt: in the latter acts at the town of Grüssau, residence of the Duke of Munsterberg, in Silesia.

TIME; the end of the thirteenth century.

DEATH'S JEST-BOOK;

OR THE FOOL'S TRAGEDY.

ACT I.

SCENE I. *Port of Ancona.*

Enter MANDRAKE *and* JOAN.

Mandr.

AM I a man of gingerbread that you should mould me to your liking? To have my way, in spite of your tongue and reason's teeth, tastes better than Hungary wine; and my heart beats in a honey-pot now I reject you and all sober sense: so tell my master, the doctor, he must seek another zany for his booth, a new wise merry Andrew. My jests are cracked, my coxcomb fallen, my bauble confiscated, my cap decapitated. Toll the bell; for oh! for oh! Jack Pudding is no more!

Joan. Wilt thou away from *me* then, sweet Mandrake? Wilt thou not marry me?

Mandr. Child, my studies must first be ended. Thou knowest I hunger after wisdom, as the red sea after ghosts: therefore will I travel awhile.

Joan. Whither, dainty Homunculus?

Mandr. Whither should a student in the black arts, a journeyman magician, a Rosicrucian? Where is our country? You heard the herald this morning thrice invite all christian folk to follow the brave knight, Sir Wolfram, to the shores of Egypt, and there help to free from bondage his noble fellow in arms, Duke Melveric, whom, on a pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre, wild pagans captured. There, Joan, in that Sphynx land found Raimund Lully those splinters of the philosopher's stone with which he made English Edward's gold. There dwell hoary magicians, who have given up their trade and live sociably as crocodiles on the banks of the Nile. There can one chat with mummies in a pyramid, and breakfast on basilisk's eggs. Thither then, Homunculus Mandrake, son of the great Paracelsus; languish no more in the ignorance of these climes, but aboard with alembic and crucible, and weigh anchor for Egypt.

Enter ISBRAND.

Isbr. Good morrow, brother Vanity! How? soul of a pickle-herring, body of a spagirical toss-pot, doublet of motley, and mantle of pilgrim, how art thou transmuted! Wilt thou desert our brotherhood, fool

sublimate? Shall the motley chapter no longer boast thee? Wilt thou forswear the order of the bell, and break thy vows to Momus? Have mercy on Wisdom and relent.

Mandr. Respect the grave and sober, I pray thee. To-morrow I know thee not. In truth, I mark that our noble faculty is in its last leaf. The dry rot of prudence hath eaten the ship of fools to dust; she is no more sea worthy. The world will see its ears in a glass no longer; So we are laid aside and shall soon be forgotten; for why should the feast of asses come but once a year, when all the days are foaled of one mother? O world, world! The gods and fairies left thee, for thou wert too wise; and now, thou Socratic star, thy demon, the great Pan, Folly, is parting from thee. The oracles still talked in their sleep, shall our grand-children say, till Master Merriman's kingdom was broken up: now is every man his own fool, and the world's sign is taken down.

(*He sings.*)

Folly hath now turned out of door
Mankind and Fate, who were before
Jove's harlequin and clown:
For goosegrass-harvest now is o'er;
The world's no stage, no tavern more,
Its sign, the Fool's ta'en down.

Isbr. Farewell, thou great-eared mind: I mark, by

thy talk, that thou commencest philosopher, and then thou art only a fellow-servant out of livery. But lo! here come the uninitiated—

(*Enter* THORWALD, AMALA, WOLFRAM, Knights and Ladies.)

Thorw. The turning tide; the sea's wide leafless wind,
Wherein no birds inhabit and few traffic,
Making his cave within your sunny sails;
The eager waves, whose golden, silent kisses
Seal an alliance with your bubbling oars;
And our still-working wishes, that impress
Their meaning on the conscience of the world,
And prompt the unready Future,—all invite you
Unto your voyage. Prosperous be the issue,
As is the promise, and the purpose good!
Are all the rest aboard?

Wolfr. All. 'Tis a band
Of knights, whose bosoms pant with one desire,
And live but in the hope to free their prince:
All hearts beat merrily, all arms are ready.

Mandr. All, sir Knight; even the very pigs and capons, and poor dear great Mandrake must be shipped too.

Wolfr. Who is this saucy fellow, that prates between?

Isbr. One of the many you have made. Yesterday

he was a fellow of my colour and served a quacksalver, but now he lusts after the mummy country, whither you are bound. 'Tis a servant of the rosy cross, a correspondent of the stars; the dead are his boon companions, and the secrets of the moon his knowledge. But had I been cook to a chameleon, I could not sweeten the air to his praise enough. Suffice it, of his wisdom Solomon knew less than a bee of fossil flowers, or the ambrosian demigods of table beer. We fools send him as our ambassador to Africa; take him with you, or be yourself our consul.

Wolfr. Aboard then in all speed; and sink us not with thy understanding.

Mandr. I thank thee, Knight. Twice shalt thou live for this, if I bottle eternity. [*Exit, with* JOAN.

Thorw. These letters yet, full of most weighty secrets:
Wherein, of what I dare but whisper to thee,
Since the dissemblers listen to our speech;
Of his two sons, whose love and dread ambition,
Crossing like deadly swords, teach us affright;
And of the uncertain people, who incline
Daily more to the present influence,
Forgetting all that their sense apprehends not;
I have at large discoursed unto the duke:
And may you find his spirit strong to bear
The bending load of such untoward tidings,
As must press hard upon him.

Amala. And forget not
Our duke, with gentle greetings, to remind
Of those who have no sword to raise for him,
But whose unarmed love is not less true,
Than theirs who seek him helmed. Farewell, sir knight;
They say you serve a lady in those lands,
So we dare offer you no token else
But our good wishes.

Wolfr. Thanks, and farewell to all;
And so I take my leave.

Amala. We to our homes;
You to the homeless waves; unequal parting.

Wolfr. The earth may open, and the sea o'erwhelm;
Many the ways, the little home is one;
Thither the courser leads, thither the helm,
And at one gate we meet when all is done.

[*Exeunt all but* WOLFRAM *and* ISBRAND.

Isbr. Stay: you have not my blessing yet. With what jest shall I curse you in earnest? Know you this garb, and him who wears it, and wherefore it is worn? A father slain and plundered; a sister's love first worn in the bosom, then trampled in the dust: our fraternal bond, shall it so end that thou savest him whom we should help to damn? O do it, and I shall learn to laugh the dead out of their coffins!

Wolfr. Hence with your dark demands: let's shape our lives
After the merciful lesson of the sun,

That gilds our purpose. See the dallying waves
Caress invitingly into their bosom
My fleet ship's keel, that at her anchor bounds
As doth the greyhound at her leader's hand,
Following her eye beams after the light roe.

Isbr. Away then, away! Thus perish our good Revenge! Unfurl your sails: let all the honest finny folk of ocean, and those fair witty spinsters, the mermaids, follow your luckless boats with mockery: sea serpents and sea-dogs and venomous krakens have mercy on your mercy, and drag you down to the salt water element of pity! What, O! what spirit of our ancestral enemies would dare to whisper through our father's bones the tale of thy apostacy? Deliver *him* from the Saracens' irons, or the coil of the desert snake, who robbed our sire's grey hairs of a kingdom, his heart of its best loved daughter, and trod him down a despairing beggar to the crowned corpses of our progenitors? Save *him*, who slew our hopes; who cozened us of our share of this sepulchral planet, whereon our statues should have stood sceptred? Revenge, Revenge lend me your torch, that I may by its bloody fire see the furrows of this man's countenance, which once were iron, like the bars of Hell gate, and devilish thoughts peeped through them; but now are as a cage of very pitiful apes.

Wolfr. Should we repent this change? I know not why.
We came disguised into the court, stiff limbed

With desperate intent, and doubly souled
With murder's devil and our own still ghosts.
But must I not relent, finding the heart,
For which my dagger hungered, so inclined
In brotherly affection unto me?
O bless the womanish weakness of my soul,
Which came to slay, and leads me now to save!

Isbr. Hate! Hate! Revenge and blood! These are the first words my boys shall learn. What accursed poison has that Duke, that snake, with his tongue, his fang, dropped into thine ear? Thou art no brother of mine more: his soul was of that tune which shall awaken the dead: for thine! if I could make a trumpet of the devil's antlers, and blow thee through it, my lady's poodle would be scarce moved to a hornpipe. O fie on't! Thou my brother? Say when hast thou undergone transfusion, and whose hostile blood now turns thy life's wheels? Who has poured Lethe into thy veins, and washed thy father out of heart and brains? Ha! be pale, and smile, and be prodigal of thy body's movements, for thou hast no soul more. *That* thy sire placed in thee; and, with the determination to avenge him, thou hast driven it out of doors. But 'tis well so: why lament? Now I have all the hatred and revenge of the world to myself to abhor and murder him with.

Wolfr. Thou speak'st unjustly, what thou rashly think'st;

But time must soften and convince: now leave me,
If thou hast nothing but reproach for pastime.

Isbr. Be angry then, and we will curse each other.
But if thou goest now to deliver this man, come not again for fear of me and our father's spirit: for when he visits me in the night, screaming revenge, my heart forgets that my head wears a fool's cap, and dreams of daggers: come not again then!

Wolfr. O think not, brother, that our father's spirit
Breathes earthy passion more: he is with me
And guides me to the danger of his foe,
Bringing from heaven, his home, pity and pardon.
But, should his blood need bloody expiation,
Then let *me* perish. Blind these eyes, my sire,
Palsy my vigorous arm, snow age upon me,
Strike me with lightning down into the deep,
Open me any grave that earth can spare;
Leave me the truth of love, and death is lovely.

[*Exit.*

Isbr. O lion-heartedness right asinine!
Such lily-livered meek humanity
Saves not thy duke, good brother; it but shines
Sickly upon his doom, as moonbeams breaking
Upon a murderer's grave-digging spade.
Or fate's a fool, or I will be his fate.
What ho! Sir Knight! One word—Now for a face
As innocent and lamblike as the wool
That brings a plague.

(*Re-enter* WOLFRAM.)

Wolfr. What will you more with me?

Isbr. Go, if you must and will; but take with you
At least this letter of the governor's,
Which, in your haste, you dropped. I must be honest,
For so my hate was ever. Go.

Wolfr. And prosper! [*Exit.*

Isbr. Now then he plunges right into the waters!
O Lie, O Lie, O lovely lady Lie,
They told me that thou art the devil's daughter.
Then thou art greater than thy father, Lie;
For while he mopes in Hell, thou queen'st it bravely,
Ruling the earth under the name of Truth,
While she is at the bottom of the well,
Where Joseph left her.

Song from the ship.

To sea, to sea! The calm is o'er;
The wanton water leaps in sport,
And rattles down the pebbly shore;
The dolphin wheels, the sea-cows snort,
And unseen Mermaids' pearly song
Comes bubbling up, the weeds among.
Fling broad the sail, dip deep the oar:
To sea, to sea! the calm is o'er.

To sea, to sea! our wide-winged bark
Shall billowy cleave its sunny way,

And with its shadow, fleet and dark,
Break the caved Tritons' azure day,
Like mighty eagle soaring light
O'er antelopes on Alpine height.
The anchor heaves, the ship swings free,
The sails swell full. To sea, to sea!

Isbr. The idiot merriment of thoughtless men!
How the fish laugh at them, that swim and toy
About the ruined ship, wrecked deep below,
Whose pilot's skeleton, all full of sea weeds,
Leans on his anchor, grinning like their Hope.
But I will turn my bosom now to thee,
Brutus, thou saint of the avenger's order;
Refresh me with thy spirit, or pour in
Thy whole great ghost. Isbrand, thou tragic fool,
Cheer up. Art thou alone? Why so should be
Creators and destroyers. I'll go brood,
And strain my burning and distracted soul
Against the naked spirit of the world,
Till some portent's begotten. [*Exit.*

SCENE II.

The African Coast: a woody solitude near the sea. In the back ground ruins overshadowed by the characteristic vegetation of the oriental regions.

The DUKE *and* SIBYLLA; *the latter sleeping in a tent.*

Duke. Soft sleep enwrap thee: with his balm bedew
Thy young fair limbs, Sibylla: thou didst need
The downy folding of his arms about thee.
And wake not yet, for still the starless night
Of our misfortune holds its ghostly noon.
No serpent shall creep o'er the sand to sting thee,
No springing tiger, no uncouth sea-monster,
(For such are now the partners of thy chamber,)
Disturb thy rest: only the birds shall dare
To shake the sparkling blossoms that hang o'er thee,
And fan thee with their wings. As I watch for thee,
So may the power, that has so far preserved us,
Now in the uttermost, now that I feel
The cold drops on my forehead, and scarce know
Whether Fear shed them there, or the near breath
Of our pursuing foes has settled on it,
Stretch its shield o'er us.

Enter ZIBA.

What bring'st, Ziba? Hope?
Else be as dumb as that thou bring'st, Despair.

Ziba. Fruits: as I sat among the boughs, and robbed
The sparrows and their brothers of their bread,
A horde of casqued Saracens rode by,
Each swearing that thy sword should rest ere night
Within his sheath, his weapon in thy breast.

Duke. Speak lower, Ziba, lest the lady wake.
Perhaps she sleeps not, but with half-shut eyes
Will hear her fate. The slaves shall need to wash
My sword of Moslem blood before they sheath it.
Which path took they?

Ziba. Sleeping, or feigning sleep,
Well done of her: 'tis trying on a garb
Which she must wear, sooner or later, long:
'Tis but a warmer lighter death. The ruffians,
Of whom I spoke, turned towards the cedar forest,
And, as they went in, there rushed forth a lion
And tore their captain down. Long live the lion!
We'll drink his tawny health: he gave us wine.
For, while the Moors in their black fear were flying,
I crept up to the fallen wretch, and borrowed
His flask of rubious liquor. May the prophet
Forgive him, as I do, for carrying it!
This for to-day: to-morrow hath gods too,
Who'll ripen us fresh berries, and uncage
Another lion on another foe.

Duke. Brave Arab, thanks. But saw'st thou from the heights
No christian galley steering for this coast?

Ziba. I looked abroad upon the wide old world,
And in the sky and sea, through the same clouds,
The same stars saw I glistening, and nought else.
And as my soul sighed unto the world's soul,
Far in the north a wind blackened the waters,
And, after that creating breath was still,
A dark speck sat on the sky's edge: as watching
Upon the heaven-girt border of my mind
The first faint thought of a great deed arise,
With force and fascination I drew on
The wished sight, and my hope seemed to stamp
Its shape upon it. Not yet is it clear
What, or from whom, the vessel.

Duke. Liberty!
Thou breakest through our dungeon's wall of waves,
As morning bursts the towery spell of night.
Horse of the desert, thou, coy arrowy creature,
Startest like sunrise up, and, from thy mane
Shaking abroad the dews of slumber, boundest
With sparkling hoof along the scattered sands,
The livelong day in liberty and light.
But see, the lady stirs. Once more look out,
And thy next news be safety. [*Exit* ZIBA.
Hast thou gathered
Rest and refreshment from thy desert couch,
My fair Sibylla?

Sibyl. Deeply have I slept.
As one who hath gone down unto the springs
Of his existence and there bathed, I come
Regenerate up into the world again.
Kindest protector, 'tis to thee I owe
This boon, a greater than my parents gave.
Me, who had never seen this earth, this heaven;
The sun; the stars, the flowers, but shut from nature
Within my dungeon birthplace lived in darkness,
Me hast thou freed from the oppressor's chain,
And godlike given me this heaven, this earth,
The flowers, the stars, the sun. Methinks it were
Ingratitude to thank thee for a gift
So measurelessly great.

Duke. As yet, sweet lady,
I have deserved but little thanks of thine.
We've not yet broken prison. This wall of waves
Still towers between us and the world of men;
That too I hope to climb. Our true Egyptian
Hath brought me news of an approaching ship.
When that hath borne thee to our German shore,
And thou amongst the living tastest life,
And gallants shall have shed around thy presence
A glory of the starry looks of love,
For thee to move in, thank me then.

Sibyl. I wish not
To leave this shady quiet bower of life.
Why should we seek cruel mankind again?

Nature is kinder far: and every thing
That lives around us, with its pious silence,
Gives me delight: the insects, and the birds
That come unto our table, seeking food,
The flowers, upon whose petals Night lays down
Her dewy necklace, are my dearest playmates.
O let us never leave them.

Duke. That would be
To rob thy fate of thee. In other countries
Another godliker mankind doth dwell,
Whose works each day adorn and deify
The world their fathers left them. Thither shalt thou,
For among them must be the one thou'rt born for.
Durst thou be such a traitress to thy beauty
As to live here unloving and unloved?

Sibyl. Love I not thee? O, if I feel beside thee
Content and an unruffled calm, in which
My soul doth gather round thee, to reflect
Thy heavenly goodness: if I feel my heart
So full of comfort near thee, that no room
For any other wish, no doubt, remains;
Love I not thee?

Duke. Dear maiden, thou art young.
Thou must see many, and compare their merits
Ere thou canst choose. Esteem and quiet friendship
Oft bear Love's semblance for awhile.

Sibyl. I know it;
Thou shalt hear how. A year and more is past

Since a brave Saxon knight did share our prison;
A noble generous man, in whose discourse
I found much pleasure: yet, when he was near me,
There ever was a pain which I could taste
Even in the thick and sweetest of my comfort:
Strange dread of meeting, greater dread of parting:
My heart was never still: and many times,
When he had fetched me flowers, I trembled so
That oft they fell as I was taking them
Out of his hand. When I would speak to him
I heard not, and I knew not what I said.
I saw his image clearer in his absence
Than near him, for my eyes were strangely troubled;
And never had I dared to talk thus to him.
Yet this I thought was Love. O self deceived!
For now I can speak all I think to thee
With confidence and ease. What else can that be
Except true love?

Duke. The like I bear to thee,
O more than all that thou hast promised me:
For if another being stepped between us,
And were he my best friend, I must forget
All vows, and cut his heart away from mine.

Sibyl. Think not on that: it is impossible.

Duke. Yet, my Sibylla, oft first love must perish;
Like the poor snow-drop, boyish love of Spring,
Born pale to die, and strew the path of triumph

Before the imperial glowing of the rose,
Whose passion conquers all.

Enter ZIBA.

Ziba. O my dear lord, we're saved!

Duke. How? Speak quickly.
Though every word hath now no meaning in't,
Since thou hast said 'she's saved.'

Ziba. The ship is in the bay, a christian knight
Steps from his boat upon the shore.

Duke. Blest hour!
And yet how palely, with what faded lips
Do we salute this unhoped change of fortune!
Thou art so silent, lady; and I utter
Shadows of words, like to an ancient ghost,
Arisen out of hoary centuries
Where none can speak his language. I had thought
That I should laugh, and shout, and leap on high:
But see this breath of joy hath damped my soul,
Melted the icy mail, with which despair
Had clad my heart and sealed the springs of weakness:
And O! how feeble, faint, and sad I go
To welcome what I prayed for. Thou art silent;
How art thou then, my love?

Sibyl. Now Hope and Fear
Stand by me, masked in one another's shapes;
I know not which is which, and, if I did,
I doubt which I should choose.

Enter a Knight.

Knight. Hither, Sir Knight—
Duke. What knight?
Knight. What knight, but Wolfram?
Duke. Wolfram, *my* knight!
Sibyl. My day, my Wolfram!
Duke. Know'st him?
Sibyl. His foot is on my heart; he comes, he comes.

Enter WOLFRAM, *knights and attendants.*

Wolfr. Are these thy comrades?
Then, Arab, thy life's work and mine is done.
My duke, my brother knight!
Duke. O friend! So call me!
Wolfram, thou comest to us like a god,
Giving life where thou touchest with thy hand.
Wolfr. Were it mine own, I'd break it here in twain,
And give you each a half.
Duke. I will not thank thee,
I will not welcome thee, embrace and bless thee;
Nor will I weep in silence. Gratitude,
Friendship, and Joy are beggar'd, and turned forth
Out of my heart for shallow hypocrites:
They understand me not; and my soul, dazzled,
Stares on the unknown feelings that now crowd it,
Knows none of them, remembers none, counts none,
More than a new-born child in its first hour.
One word, and then we'll speak of this no more:

At parting each of us did tear a leaf
Out of a magic book; and, robbing life
Of the red juice with which she feeds our limbs,
We wrote a mutual bond. Dost thou remember?

Wolfr. And if a promise reaches o'er the grave
My ghost shall not forget it. There I swore
That, if I died before thee, I would come
With the first weeds that shoot out of my grave,
And bring thee tidings of our real home.

Duke. That bond hast thou now cancelled thus; or rather
Unto me lying in my sepulchre
Comest thou, and say'st, "Arise and live again."

Wolfr. And with thee dost thou bring some angel back.
Look on me, lady.

Sibyl (aside). Pray heaven, it be not
The angel of the death of one of you,
To make the grave and the flowers' roots amends.
Now turn I to thee, knight. O dared I hope,
Thou hast forgotten me!

Wolfr. Then dead indeed
Were I, and my soul disinherited
Of immortality, which love of thee
Gave me the proof of first. Forgotten thee!
Ay; if thou be not she, with whom I shared
Few months ago that dungeon, which thy presence
Lit with delight unknown to liberty;

If thou be not Sibylla, she whose semblance
Here keepeth watch upon my breast. Behold it:
Morning and night my heart doth beat against it.
Thou gavest it me one day, when I admired,
Above all crystal gems, a dewdrop globe
Which, in the joyous dimple of a flower,
Imaged thee tremulously. Since that time
Many a secret tear hath mirrored thee,
And many a thought, over this pictured beauty.
Speak to me then: or art thou, as this toy,
Only the likeness of the maid I loved?
But there's no seeming such a one. O come!
This talking is a pitiful invention:
We'll leave it to the wretched. All my science,
My memory, I'd give for this one joy,
And keep it ever secret.

Sibyl. Wolfram, thou movest me:
With soul-compelling looks thou draw'st me to thee:
O! at thy call I must surrender me,
My lord, my love, my life.

Duke. Thy life! O lives, that dwell
In these three bosoms, keep your footings fast,
For there's a blasting thought stirring among you.
They love each other. Silence! Let them love;
And let him be her love. She is a flower,
Growing upon a grave. Now, gentle lady,
Retire, beseech you, to the tent and rest.
My friend and I have need to use those words

Which are bequeathed unto the miserable.
Come hither; you have made me master of them:
Who dare be wretched in the world beside me?
Think now what you have done; and tremble at it.
But I forgive thee, love. Go in and rest thee.

Sibyl. And he?

Duke. Is he not mine?

Wolfr. Go in, sweet, fearlessly.
I come to thee, before thou'st time to feel
That I am absent.

[*Exit* SIBYLLA; *followed by the rest.*

Duke. Wolfram, we have been friends.

Wolfr. And will be ever.
I know no other way to live.

Duke. 'Tis pity.
I would you had been one day more at sea.

Wolfr. Why so?

Duke. You're troublesome to-day. Have you not marked it?

Wolfr. Alas! that you should say so.

Duke. That's all needless.
Those times are past, forgotten. Hear me, knight:
That lady's love is mine. Now you know that,
Do what you dare.

Wolfr. The lady! my Sibylla!
I would I did not love thee for those words,
That I might answer well.

Duke. Unless thou yield'st her—

For thou hast even subdued her to thy arms,
Against her will and reason, wickedly
Torturing her soul with spells and adjurations,—
Unless thou giv'st her the free will again
To take her natural course of being on,
Which flowed towards me with gentle love:—O Wolfram,
Thou know'st not how she filled my soul so doing,
Even as the streams an ocean:—Give her me,
And we are friends again. But I forget:
Thou lovest her too; a stern, resolved rival;
And passionate, I know. Nay then, speak out:
'Twere better that we argued warmly here,
Till the blood has its way.

Wolfr. Unworthy friend!
My lord—

Duke. Forget that I am so, and many things
Which we were to each other, and speak out.
I would we had much wine; 'twould bring us sooner
To the right point.

Wolfr. Can it be so? O Melveric!
I thought thou wert the very one of all
Who shouldst have heard my secret with delight.
I thought thou wert my friend.

Duke. Such things as these,
Friendship, esteem, faith, hope, and sympathy,
We need no more: away with them for ever!
Wilt follow them out of the world? Thou see'st

All human things die and decay around us.
'Tis the last day for us; and we stand bare
To let our cause be tried. See'st thou not why?
We love one creature: which of us shall tear her
Out of his soul? I have in all the world
Little to comfort me, few that do name me
With titles of affection, and but one
Who came into my soul at its night-time,
As it hung glistening with starry thoughts
Alone over its still eternity,
And gave it godhead. Thou art younger far,
More fit to be beloved; when thou appearest
All hearts incline to thee, all prouder spirits
Are troubled unto tears and yearn to love thee.
O, if thou knew'st thy heart-compelling power,
Thou wouldst not envy me the only creature
That holds me dear. If I were such as thou,
I would not be forgetful of our friendship,
But yield to the abandoned his one joy.

Wolfr. Thou prob'st me to the quick: before to-day,
Methought thou could'st from me nothing demand
And I refuse it.

Duke. Wolfram, I do beseech thee;
The love of her's my heaven; thrust me not from her;
I have no hope elsewhere: thrust me not from her;
Or thou dost hurl me into hell's embrace,
Making me the devil's slave to thy perdition.

Wolfr. O, would to heaven,

That I had found thee struggling in a battle,
Alone against the swords of many foes!
Then had I rescued thee, and died content,
Ignorant of the treasure I had saved thee.
But now my fate hath made a wisher of me:
O woe that so it is! O woe to wish
That she had never been, who is the cause!

Duke. *He* is the cause! O fall the curse on him,
And may he be no more, who dares the gods
With such a wish! Speak thou no more of love,
No more of friendship here: the world is open:
I wish you life and merriment enough
From wealth and wine, and all the dingy glory
Fame doth reward those with, whose love-spurned hearts
Hunger for goblin immortality.
Live long, grow old, and honour crown thy hairs,
When they are pale and frosty as thy heart.
Away. I have no better blessing for thee.
Wilt thou not leave me?

Wolfr. Should I leave thee thus?

Duke. Why not? or must I hate thee perfectly?
And tell thee so? Away now I beseech you!
Have I not cut all ties betwixt us off?
Why, wert thou my own soul, I'd drive thee from me.
Go, put to sea again.

Wolfr. Farewell then, Duke.
Methinks thy better self indeed hath parted,
And that I follow. [*Exit.*

Duke. Thither? Thither? Traitor
To every virtue. Ha! What's this thought,
Shapeless and shadowy, that keeps wheeling round,
Like a dumb creature that sees coming danger,
And breaks its heart trying in vain to speak?
I know the moment: 'tis a dreadful one,
Which in the life of every one comes once;
When, for the frighted hesitating soul,
High heaven and luring sin with promises
Bid and contend: oft the faltering spirit,
O'ercome by the fair fascinating fiend,
Gives her eternal heritage of life
For one caress, for one triumphant crime.—
Pitiful villain! that dost long to sin,
And dar'st not. Shall I dream my soul is bathing
In his reviving blood, yet lose my right,
My only health, my sole delight on earth,
For fear of shadows on a chapel wall
In some pale painted Hell? No: by thy beauty,
I will possess thee, maiden. Doubt and care
Be trampled in the dust with the worm conscience!
Farewell then, Wolfram: now Amen is said
Unto thy time of being in this world:
Thou shalt die. Ha! the very word doth double
My strength of life: the resolution leaps
Into my heart divinely, as doth Mars
Upon the trembling footboard of his car,
Hurrying into battle wild and panting,

Even as my death-dispensing thought does now.
Ho! Ziba!

Enter ZIBA.

Hush! How still, how full, how lightly
I move since this resolve, about the place,
Like to a murder-charged thunder cloud
Lurking about the starry streets of night,
Breathless and masked,
O'er a still city sleeping by the sea.
Ziba, come hither; thou'rt the night I'll hang
My muffled wrath in. Come, I'll give thee work
Shall make thy life still darker, for one light on't
Must be put out. O let me joy no more,
Till Fate hath kissed my wooing soul's desire
Off her death-honied lips, and so set seal
To my decree, in which he's sepulchred.
Come, Ziba, thou must be my counsellor.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

A Tent on the sea-shore: sun-set.

WOLFRAM *and* SIBYLLA.

Wolfr. This is the oft-wished hour, when we together
May walk upon the sea-shore: let us seek

Some greensward overshadowed by the rocks.
Wilt thou come forth? Even now the sun is setting
In the triumphant splendour of the waves.
Hear you not how they leap?

Sibyl. Nay; we will watch
The sun go down upon a better day:
Look not on him this evening.

Wolfr. Then let's wander
Under the mountain's shade in the deep valley,
And mock the woody echoes with our songs.

Sibyl. That wood is dark, and all the mountain caves
Dreadful, and black, and full of howling winds:
Thither we will not wander.

Wolfr. Shall we seek
The green and golden meadows, and there pluck
Flowers for thy couch, and shake the dew out of them?

Sibyl. The snake that loves the twilight is come out,
Beautiful, still, and deadly; and the blossoms
Have shed their fairest petals in the storm
Last night; the meadow's full of fear and danger.

Wolfr. Ah! you will to the rocky fount, and there
We'll see the fire-flies dancing in the breeze,
And the stars trembling in the trembling water,
And listen to the daring nightingale
Defying the old night with harmony.

Sibyl. Nor that: but we will rather here remain,
And earnestly converse. What said the Duke?
Surely no good.

Wolfr. A few unmeaning words,
I have almost forgotten.
Sibyl. Tell me truly,
Else I may fear much worse.
Wolfr. Well: it may be
That he was somewhat angry. 'Tis no matter;
He must soon cool and be content.

Enter ZIBA.

Ziba. Hail, knight!
I bring to thee the draught of welcome. Taste it.
The Grecian sun ripened it in the grape,
Which Grecian maidens plucked and pressed: then came
The desart Arab to the palace gate,
And took it for his tribute. It is charmed;
And they who drink of such have magic dreams.
Wolfr. Thanks for thy care. I'll taste it presently:
Right honey for such bees as I.

Enter a Knight.

Knight. Up, brave Wolfram!
Arouse thee, and come forth to help and save.
Wolfr. Here is my sword. Who needs it?
Sibyl. Is't the Duke?
O my dark Fear!
Knight. 'Tis he. Hunting in the forest,
A band of robbers rushed on us.

Wolfr. How many?

Knight. Some twelve to five of us; and in the fight,
Which now is at the hottest, my sword failed me.
Up, good knight, in all speed: I'll lead the way.

Wolfr. Sibylla, what deserves he at our hands?

Sibyl. Assist him; he preserved me.

Wolfr. For what end?

Sibyl. Death's sickle points thy questions. No delay:
But hence.

Enter a second Knight.

Wolfr. Behold another from the field,—
Thy news?

2nd *Knight.* My fellow soldiers all
Bleed and grow faint: fresh robbers pour upon us,
And the Duke stands at bay unhelmed against them.

Wolfr. Brave comrade, keep the rogues before thee, dancing
At thy sword's point, but a few moments longer;
Then I am with thee. Farewell thou, Sibylla;
He shall not perish thus. Rise up, my men,
To horse with sword and spear, and follow flying.
I pledge thee, lady. (*takes the goblet*)

Ziba (*dashing it to the ground*). Flow wine, like Moorish gore.
Ha! it rings well and lies not. 'Tis right metal
For funeral bells.

Wolfr. Slave, what hast thou done?

Ziba. Pour thou unto the subterranean gods
Libations of thy blood: I have shed wine.
Now, will ye not away?
Wolfr. Come hither, dark one:
Say, on thy life, why hast thou spilt that wine?
Ziba. A superstitious fancy: but now hence.
'Twas costly liquor too.
Wolfr. Then finish it.
'Twas well that fortune did reserve for you
These last and thickest drops here at the bottom.
Ziba. Drink them? forbid the prophet!
Wolfr. Slave, thou diest else.
Ziba. Give me the beaker then.—O God, I dare not.
Death is too bitter so: alas! 'tis poison.
Sibyl. Pernicious caitiff!
Wolfr. Patience, my Sibylla!
I knew it by thy lying eye. Thou'rt pardoned.
I may not tread upon the toothless serpent.
But for thy lord, the Saracen deal with him
As he thinks fit. Wolfram can aid no murderer.
Sibyl. Mercy! O let me not cry out in vain:
Forgive him yet.
Wolfr. The crime I do forgive:
And Heaven, if he's forgiven there, preserve him!
O monstrous! in the moment when my heart
Looked back on him with the old love again,
Then was I marked for slaughter by his hand.

Forgive him? 'Tis enough: 'tis much. Lie still
Thou sworded hand, and thou be steely, heart.

Enter a third Knight *wounded.*

3rd *Knight.* Woe! woe! Duke Melveric is the Arabs' captive.

Sibyl. Then Heaven have mercy on him!

Wolfr. So 'tis best:
He was o'erthrown and mastered by his passion,
As by a tiger. Death will burst the fetters.

3rd *Knight.* They bind him to a pillar in the desart,
And aim their poisoned arrows at his heart.

Wolfr. O Melveric, why didst thou so to me?
Sibylla, I despise this savage Duke,
But thus he shall not die. No man in bonds
Can be my enemy. He once was noble;
Once very noble. Let me set him free,
And we can then be knightly foes again.
Up, up, my men, once more and follow me.
I bring him to thee, love, or ne'er return.

Sibyl. A thousand tearful thanks for this. O Wolfram!

[*Exeunt severally.*

SCENE IV.

A forest: the moonlit sea glistens between the trees.

Enter Arabs *with the* DUKE.

1st *Arab.* Against this column: there's an ancient beast
Here in the neighbourhood, which to-night will thank us
For the ready meal.

[*they bind the Duke against a column.*

2nd *Arab.* Christian, to thy houris
Boast that we took thy blood in recompense
Of our best comrades.

1st *Arab.* Hast a saint or mistress?
Call on them, for next minute comes the arrow.

Duke. O Wolfram! now methinks thou lift'st the cup.
Strike quickly, Arab.

1st. *Arab.* Brothers, aim at him.

Enter WOLFRAM *and knights.*

Wolfr. Down, murderers, down.

2nd *Arab.* Fly! there are hundreds on us.

(*Fight—the Arabs are beaten out and pursued by the knights.*)

Wolfr. (*unbinding the Duke*) Thank heaven, not too late! Now you are free.
There is your life again.
Duke. Hast thou drunk wine?
Answer me, knight, hast thou drunk wine this evening?
Wolfr. Nor wine, nor poison. The slave told me all.
O Melveric, if I deserve it from thee,
Now canst thou mix my draught. But be't forgotten.
Duke. And wilt thou not now kill me?
Wolfr. Let us strive
Henceforward with good deeds against each other,
And may you conquer there. Hence, and for ever,
No one shall whisper of that deadly thought.
Now we will leave this coast.
Duke. Ay, we will step
Into a boat and steer away: but whither?
Think'st thou I'll live in the vile consciousness
That I have dealt so wickedly and basely,
And been of thee so like a god forgiven?
No: 'tis impossible . . Friend, by your leave—
[*takes a sword from a fallen Arab.*
O what a coward villain must I be,
So to exist.
Wolfr. Be patient but awhile,
And all such thoughts will soften.
Duke. The grave be patient,
That's yawning at our feet for one of us.

I want no comfort. I am comfortable,
As any soul under the eaves of Heaven:
For one of us must perish in this instant.
Fool, would thy virtue shame and crush me down;
And make a grateful blushing bondslave of me?
O no! I dare be wicked still: the murderer,
My thought has christened me, I must remain.
O curse thy meek, forgiving, idiot heart,
That thus must take its womanish revenge,
And with the loathliest poison, pardon, kill me:
Twice-sentenced, die! [*Strikes at Wolfram.*

Wolfr. Madman, stand off.

Duke. I pay my thanks in steel.
Thus be all pardoners pardoned.

[*Fight: Wolfram falls.*

Wolfr. Murderer! mine and my father's! O my brother,
Too true thy parting words . . Repent thou never!

Duke. So then we both are blasted: but thou diest,
Who daredst to love athwart my love, discover,
And then forgive, my treachery. Now proclaim me.
Let my name burn through all dark history
Over the waves of time, as from a light-house,
Warning approach. My worldly work is done.

ZIBA *runs in.*

Ziba. They come, they come; if thy thought be not yet

Incarnate in a deed, it is too late.
Is it a deed?

Duke. Look at me.

Ziba. 'Tis enough.

Duke. See'st? Know'st? Be silent and be gone.

[*Ziba retires: the knights re-enter with* SIBYLLA.

Knight. O luckless victory! our leader wounded!

Sibyl. Bleeding to death! and he, whom he gave life to,
Even his own, unhurt and armed! Speak, Wolfram:
Let me not think thou'rt dying.

Wolfr. But I am:
Slain villanously. Had I stayed, Sibylla—
But thou and life are lost; so I'll be silent.

Sibyl. O Melveric, why kneel'st not thou beside him?
Weep'st not with me? For thee he fell. O speak!
Who did this, Wolfram?

Wolfr. 'Tis well done, my Sibylla:
So burst the portals of sepulchral night
Before the immortal rising of the sun.

Sibyl. Who did this, Melveric?

Duke. Let him die in quiet.
Hush! there's a thought upon his lips again.

Wolfr. A kiss, Sibylla! I ne'er yet have kissed thee,
And my new bride, death's lips are cold, they say.
Now it is darkening.

Sibyl. O not yet, not yet!
Who did this, Wolfram?
Wolfr. *Thou* know'st, Melveric:
At the last day reply thou to that question,
When such an angel asks it: I'll not answer
Or then or now. [*Dies.*

(*Sibylla throws herself on the body; the Duke stands motionless; the rest gather round in silence. The scene closes.*)

A voice from the waters.

The swallow leaves her nest,
The soul my weary breast;
But therefore let the rain
On my grave
Fall pure; for why complain?
Since both will come again
O'er the wave.

The wind dead leaves and snow
Doth hurry to and fro;
And, once, a day shall break
O'er the wave,
When a storm of ghosts shall shake
The dead, until they wake
In the grave.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

The interior of a church at Ancona. The DUKE, *in the garb of a pilgrim,* SIBYLLA *and Knights, assembled round the corpse of Wolfram, which is lying on a bier.*

Dirge.

IF thou wilt ease thine heart
Of love and all its smart,
Then sleep, dear, sleep;
And not a sorrow
Hang any tear on your eyelashes;
Lie still and deep,
Sad soul, until the sea-wave washes
The rim o' the sun to-morrow,
In eastern sky.

But wilt thou cure thine heart
Of love and all its smart,
Then die, dear, die;
'Tis deeper, sweeter,
Than on a rose bank to lie dreaming
With folded eye;
And then alone, amid the beaming

Of love's stars, thou'lt meet her
In eastern sky.

Knight. These rites completed, say your further pleasure.

Duke. To horse and homewards in all haste: my business
Urges each hour. This body bury here,
With all due honours. I myself will build
A monument, whereon, in after times,
Those of his blood shall read his valiant deeds,
And see the image of the bodily nature
He was a man in. Scarcely dare I, lady,
Mock you with any word of consolation:
But soothing care, and silence o'er that sorrow,
Which thine own tears alone may tell to thee
Or offer comfort for; and in all matters
What thy will best desires, I promise thee.
Wilt thou hence with us?

Sibyl. Whither you will lead me.
My will lies there, my hope, and all my life
Which was in this world. Yet if I shed tear,
It is not for his death, but for my life.
Dead is he? Say not so, but that he is
No more excepted from Eternity.
If he were dead I should indeed despair.
Can Wolfram die? Ay, as the sun doth set:
It is the earth that falls away from light;

Fixed in the heavens, although unseen by us,
The immortal life and light remains triumphant.
And therefore you shall never see me wail,
Or drop base waters of an ebbing sorrow;
No wringing hands, no sighings, no despair,
No mourning weeds will I betake me to;
But keep my thought of him that is no more,
As secret as great nature keeps his soul,
From all the world; and consecrate my being
To that divinest hope, which none can know of
Who have not laid their dearest in the grave.
Farewell, my love,—I will not say to thee
Pale corpse,—we do not part for many days.
A little sleep, a little waking more,
And then we are together out of life.

Duke. Cover the coffin up. This cold, calm stare
Upon familiar features is most dreadful:
Methinks too the expression of the face
Is changed, since all was settled gently there;
And threatens now. But I have sworn to speak
And think of that no more, which has been done—
Now then into the bustle of the world!
We'll rub our cares smooth there.

Knight. This gate, my lord;
There stand the horses.

Duke. Then we're mounted straight.
But, pri'thee friend, forget not that the Duke
Is still in prison: I am a poor pilgrim. [*Exeunt.*

Enter ISBRAND *and* SIEGFRIED *attended.*

Isbr. Dead and gone! a scurvy burthen to this ballad of life. There lies he, Siegfried; my brother, mark you; and I weep not, nor gnash the teeth, nor curse: and why not, Siegfried? Do you see this? So should every honest man be: cold, dead, and leaden-coffined. This was one who would be constant in friendship, and the pole wanders: one who would be immortal, and the light that shines upon his pale forehead now, through yonder gewgaw window, undulated from its star hundreds of years ago. That is constancy, that is life. O moral nature!

Siegfr. 'Tis well that you are reconciled to his lot and your own.

Isbr. Reconciled! A word out of a love tale, that's not in my language. No, no. I am patient and still and laborious, a good contented man; peaceable as an ass chewing a thistle; and my thistle is revenge. I do but whisper it now: but hereafter I will thunder the word, and I shall shoot up gigantic out of this pismire shape, and hurl the bolt of that revenge.

Siegfr. To the purpose: the priests return to complete the burial.

Isbr. Right: we are men of business here. Away with the body, gently and silently; it must be buried in my duke's chapel in Silesia: why, hereafter. (*The body is borne out by attendants*) That way, fellows:

the hearse stands at the corner of the square: but reverently, 'tis my brother you carry. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

A hall in the ducal castle of Munsterberg in the town of Grüssau in Silesia. THORWALD, ADALMAR, ATHULF, ISBRAND, SIEGFRIED; *the* DUKE, *disguised as a pilgrim;* AMALA; *and other ladies and knights; conversing in various groups.*

Athulf. A fair and bright assembly: never strode
Old arched Grüssau over such a tide
Of helmed chivalry, as when to-day
Our tourney guests swept, leaping billow-like,
Its palace-banked streets. Knights shut in steel,
Whose shields, like water, glassed the soul-eyed maidens,
That softly did attend their armed tread,
Flower-cinctured on the temples, whence gushed down
A full libation of star-numbered tresses,
Hallowing the neck unto love's silent kiss,
Veiling its innocent white: and then came squires,
And those who bore war's silken tapestries,
And chequered heralds: 'twas a human river,
Brimful and beating as if the great god,

Who lay beneath it, would arise. So sways
Time's sea, which Age snows into and makes deep,
When, from the rocky side of the dim future,
Leaps into it a mighty destiny,
Whose being to endow great souls have been
Centuries hoarded, and the world meanwhile
Sate like a beggar upon Heaven's threshold,
Muttering its wrongs.

Siegfr. My sprightly Athulf,
Is it possible that you can waste the day,
Which throws these pillared shades among such beauties,
In lonely thought?

Athulf. Why I have left my cup,
A lady's lips, dropping with endless kisses,
Because your minstrels hushed their harps. Why did they?
This music, which they tickle from the strings,
Is excellent for drowning ears that gape,
When one has need of whispers.

Siegfr. The old governor
Would have it so: his morning nap being o'er,
He's no more need of music, but is moving
Straight to the lists.

Athulf. A curse on that mock war!
How it will shake and sour the blood, that now
Is quiet in the men! And there's my brother,
Whose sword's his pleasure. A mere savage man,

Made for the monstrous times, but left out then,
Born by mistake with us.

Adalm. (to Isbrand) Be sure 'tis heavy.
One lance of mine a wolf shut his jaws on
But cracked it not, you'll see his bite upon it:
It lies among the hunting weapons.

Isbr. Ay,
With it I saw you once scratch out of life
A blotted Moor.

Adalm. The same; it poises well,
And falls right heavy: find it. [*Exit* ISBRAND.

Siegfr. For the tilt,
My brave lord Adalmar?

Athulf. What need of asking?
You know the man is sore upon a couch;
But upright, on his bloody-hoofed steed
Galloping o'er the ruins of his foes,
Whose earthquake he hath been, then will he shout,
Laugh, run his tongue along his trembling lip,
And swear his heart tastes honey.

Siegfr. Nay, thou'rt harsh;
He was the axe of Mars; but, Troy being felled,
Peace trims her bower with him.

Athulf. Ay; in her hand
He's iron still.

Adalm. I care not, brother Athulf,
Whether you're right or wrong: 'tis very certain,
Thank God for it, I am not Peace's lap-dog,

But Battle's shaggy whelp. Perhaps, even soon,
Good friend of Bacchus and the rose, you'll feel
Your budding wall of dalliance shake behind you,
And need my spear to prop it.

Athulf. Come the time!
You'll see that in our veins runs brother's blood.

A Lady. Is Siegfried here? At last! I've sought for you
By every harp and every lady's shoulder,
Not ever thinking you could breathe the air
That ducal cub of Munsterberg makes frightful
With his loud talk.

Siegfr. Happy in my error,
If thus to be corrected.

Re-enter ISBRAND.

Isbr. The lance, my lord:
A delicate tool to breathe a heathen's vein with.

The Lady. What, Isbrand, thou a soldier? Fie upon thee!
Is this a weapon for a fool?

Isbr. Madam, I pray thee pardon us. The fair have wrested the tongue from us, and we must give our speeches a tongue of some metal—steel or gold. And I beseech thee, lady, call me fool no more: I grow old, and in old age you know what men become. We are at court, and there it were sin to call a thing by its right name: therefore call me a fool no longer, for my

wisdom is on the wane, and I am almost as sententious as the governor.

The Lady. Excellent: wilt thou become court-confessor?

Isbr. Ay, if thou wilt begin with thy secrets, lady. But my fair mistress, and you, noble brethren, I pray you gather around me. I will now speak a word in earnest, and hereafter jest with you no more: for I lay down my profession of folly. Why should I wear bells to ring the changes of your follies on? Doth the besonneted moon wear bells, she that is the parasite and zany of the stars, and your queen, ye apes of madness? As I live I grow ashamed of the duality of my legs, for they and the apparel, forked or furbelowed, upon them constitute humanity; the brain no longer: and I wish I were an honest fellow of four shins when I look into the note-book of your absurdities. I will abdicate.

The Lady. Brave! but how dispose of your dominions, most magnanimous zany?

Isbr. My heirs at law are manifold. Yonder minister shall have my jacket; he needs many colours for his deeds. You shall inherit my mantle; for your sins, (be it whispered,) chatter with the teeth for cold; and charity, which should be their great-coat, you have not in the heart.

The Lady. Gramercy: but may I not beg your coxcomb for a friend?

Isbr. The brothers have an equal claim to that crest: they may tilt for it. But now for my crown. O cap and bells, ye eternal emblems, hieroglyphics of man's supreme right in nature; O ye, that only fall on the deserving, while oak, palm, laurel, and bay rankle on *their* foreheads, whose deserts are oft more payable at the other extremity: who shall be honoured with you? Come candidates, the cap and bells are empty.

The Lady. Those you should send to England, for the bad poets and the critics who praise them.

Isbr. Albeit worthy, those merry men cannot this once obtain the prize. I will yield Death the crown of folly. He hath no hair, and in this weather might catch cold and die: besides he has killed the best knight I knew, Sir Wolfram, and deserves it. Let him wear the cap, let him toll the bells; he shall be our new court-fool: and, when the world is old and dead, the thin wit shall find the angel's record of man's works and deeds, and write with a lipless grin on the innocent first page for a title, 'Here begins Death's Jest-book.'—There, you have my testament: henceforth speak solemnly to me, and I will give a measured answer, having relapsed into court-wisdom again.

The Lady. How the wild jester would frighten us!
Come, Siegfried:
Some of us in a corner wait your music,
Your news, and stories. My lord Adalmar,
You must be very weary all this time,

The rest are so delighted. Come along, [*to Siegfr.*
Or else his answer stuns me.

Adalm. Joyous creature!
Whose life's first leaf is hardly yet uncurled.

Athulf. Use your trade's language; were I journeyman
To Mars, the glorious butcher, I would say
She's sleek, and sacrificial flowers would look well
On her white front.

Adalm. Now, brother, can you think,
Stern as I am above, that in my depth
There is no cleft wherein such thoughts are hived
As from dear looks and words come back to me,
Storing that honey, love. O! love I do,
Through every atom of my being.

Athulf. Ay,
So do we young ones all. In winter time
This god of butterflies, this Cupid sleeps,
As they do in their cases; but May comes;
With it the bee and he: each spring of mine
He sends me a new arrow, thank the boy.
A week ago he shot me for this year;
The shaft is in my stomach, and so large
There's scarcely room for dinner.

Adalm. Shall I believe thee,
Or judge mortality by this stout sample
—I screw my mail o'er? Well, it may be so;
You are an adept in these chamber passions,

And have a heart that's Cupid's arrow cushion
Worn out with use. I never knew before
The meaning of this love. But one has taught me,
It is a heaven wandering among men,
The spirit of gone Eden haunting earth.
Life's joys, death's pangs are viewless from its bosom,
Which they who keep are gods: there's no paradise,
There is no heaven, no angels, no blessed spirits,
No souls, or they have no eternity,
If this be not a part of them.

Athulf. This in a Court!
Such sort of love might Hercules have felt
Warm from the Hydra fight, when he had fattened
On a fresh slain Bucentaur, roasted whole,
The heart of his pot-belly, till it ticked
Like a cathedral clock. But in good faith
Is this the very truth? Then have I found
My fellow fool. For I am wounded too
E'en to the quick and inmost, Adalmar.
So fair a creature! of such charms compact
As nature stints elsewhere; which you may find
Under the tender eyelid of a serpent,
Or in the gurge of a kiss-coloured rose,
By drops and sparks: but when she moves, you see
Like water from a crystal overfilled,
Fresh beauty tremble out of her and lave
Her fair sides to the ground. Of other women,
(And we have beauteous in this court of ours,)

I can remember whether nature touched
Their eye with brown or azure, where a vein
Runs o'er a sleeping eyelid, like some streak
In a young blossom; every grace count up,
Here the round turn and crevice of the arm,
There the tress-bunches, or the slender hand
Seen between harpstrings gathering music from them:
But where she is, I'm lost in her abundance,
And when she leaves me I know nothing more,
(Like one from whose awakening temples rolls
The cloudy vision of a god away,)
Than that she was divine.

Adalm. Fie sir, these are the spiced sighs of a heart,
That bubbles under wine; utter rhyme-gilding,
Beneath man's sober use. What do you speak of?

Athulf. A woman most divine, and that I love
As you dare never.

Adalm. Boy, a truce with talk.
Such words are sacred, placed within man's reach
To be used seldom, solemnly, when speaking
Of what both God and man might overhear,
You unabashed.

Athulf. Of what? What is more worthy
Than the delight of youth, being so rare,
Precious, short-lived, and irrecoverable?

Adalm. When you do mention that adored land,
Which gives you life, pride, and security,
And holy rights of freedom; or in the praise

Of those great virtues and heroic men,
That glorify the earth and give it beams,
Then to be lifted by the like devotion
Would not disgrace God's angels.
Athulf. Well sir, laud,
Worship, and swear by them, your native country
And virtues past; a phantom and a corpse:
Such airy stuff may please you. My desires
Are hot and hungry; they will have their fill
Of living dalliance, gazes, and lip-touches,
Or eat their master. Now, no more rebuking:
Peace be between us. For why are we brothers,
Being the creatures of two different gods,
But that we may not be each other's murderers?
Adalm. So be it then! But mark me, brother Athulf,
I spoke not from a cold unnatural spirit,
Barren of tenderness. I feel and know
Of woman's dignity; how it doth merit
Our total being, has all mine this moment:
But they should share with us our level lives:
Moments there are, and one is now at hand,
Too high for them. When all the world is stirred
By some preluding whisper of that trumpet,
Which shall awake the dead, to do great things,
Then the sublimity of my affection,
The very height of my beloved, shows me
How far above her's glory. When you've earned

This knowledge, tell me: I will say, you love
As a man should. [*He retires.*
Athulf. But this is somewhat true.
I almost think that I could feel the same
For her. For *her?* By heavens 'tis Amala,
Amala only, that he so can love.
There? by her side? in conference! at smiles!
Then I am born to be a fratricide.
I feel as I were killing him. Tush, tush;
A phantom of my passion! But, if true—
What? What, my heart? A strangely-quiet thought,
That will not be pronounced, doth answer me.

(THORWALD *comes forward, attended by the company.*)

Thorw. Break up! The day's of age. Knights to the lists,
And ladies to look on. We'll break some lances
Before 'tis evening. To your sports, I pray;
I follow quickly. [*He is left alone with the* DUKE.
Pilgrim, now your news:
Whence come you?
Duke. Straightway from the holy land,
Whose sanctity such floods of human blood,
Unnatural rain for it, will soon wash out.
Thorw. You saw our Duke?
Duke. I did: but Melveric
Is strangely altered. When we saw him leap,

Shut up in iron, on his burning steed
From Grüssau's threshold, he had fifty years
Upon his head, and bore them straight and upright,
Through dance, and feast, and knightly tournament.

Thorw. How! Is he not the same? 'Tis but three years
And a fourth's quarter past. What is the change?
A silvering of the hair? a deeper wrinkle
On cheek and forehead?

Duke. I do not think you'd know him,
Stood he where I do. No. I saw him lying
Beside a fountain on a battle-evening:
The sun was setting over the heaped plain;
And to my musing fancy his front's furrows,
With light between them, seemed the grated shadow
Thrown by the ribs of that field's giant, Death;
'Twixt which the finger of the hour did write
'This is the grave's.'

Thorw. How? Looked he sorrowful?
Knows he the dukedom's state?

Duke. (*giving letters to Thorwald*) Ask these. He's heard
The tidings that afflict the souls of fathers;
How these two sons of his unfilially
Have vaulted to the saddle of the people,
And charge against him. How he gained the news,
You must know best: what countermine he digs,
Those letters tell your eyes. He bade me say,

His dukedom is his body, and, he forth,
That may be sleeping, but the touch of wrong,
The murderer's barefoot tread will bring him back
Out of his Eastern visions, ere this earth
Has swung the city's length.

Thorw. I read as much:
He bids me not to move; no eye to open,
But to sit still and doze, and warm my feet
At their eruption. This security
Is most unlike him. I remember oft,
When the thin harvests shed their withered grain,
And empty poverty yelped sour-mouthed at him,
How he would cloud his majesty of form
With priestly hangings, or the tattered garb
Of the step-seated beggar, and go round
To catch the tavern talk and the street ballad,
And whispers of ancestral prophecies,
Until he knew the very nick of time,
When his heart's arrow would be on the string;
And, seizing Treason by the arm, would pour
Death back upon him.

Duke. He is wary still,
And has a snake's eye under every grass.
Your business is obedience unto him,
Who is your natal star; and mine, to worm,
Leaf after leaf, into the secret volume
Of their designs. Already has our slave,
The grape juice, left the side-door of the youngest

Open to me. You think him innocent.
Fire flashes from him; whether it be such
As treason would consult by, or the coals
Love boils his veins on, shall through this small crevice,
Through which the vine has thrust its cunning tendril,
Be looked and listened for.

Thorw. Can I believe it?
Did not I know him and his spirit's course,
Well as the shape and colour of the sun,
And when it sets and rises? Is this he?
No: 'tis the shadow of this pilgrim false,
Who stands up in his height of villany,
Shadowy as a hill, and throws his hues
Of contradiction to the heavenly light,
The stronger as it shines upon him most.
Ho! pilgrim, I have weighed and found thee villain.
Are thy knees used to kneeling? It may chance
That thou wilt change the altar for the block:
Prove thou'rt his messenger.

Duke. I wait your questions.
The very inmost secret of his heart,
Confided to you, challenge from me.

Thorw. First,
A lighter trial. If you come from him,
Tell me what friend he spoke of most.

Duke. Of thee.

Thorw. Another yet;
A knight?

Duke. There is no living knight his friend.

Thorw. O ill guessed, palmer! One, whom Melveric
Would give his life, all but his virtue for,
Lived he no more, to raise him from the dead.

Duke. Right; he would give his soul; Thorwald, his soul:—
Friendship is in its depth, and secrets sometimes
Like to a grave.—So loved the Duke that warrior.

Thorw. Enough, his name;—the name?

Duke. Ay, ay, *the name*—
Methinks there's nothing in the world but names:
All things are dead; friendship at least I'll blot
From my vocabulary. The man was called—
The knight—I cannot utter't—the knight's name—
Why dost thou ask me? I know nothing of him.
I have not seen or heard of him, of—Well,
I'll speak of him to no man more—

Thorw. Tremble then
When thou dost hear of—Wolfram! thou art pale:
Confess, or to the dungeon—

Duke. Pause! I am stuffed
With an o'erwhelming spirit: press not thou,
Or I shall burst asunder, and let through
The deluging presence of thy duke. Prepare:
He's near at hand,

Thorw. Forbid it, Providence!
He steps on a plot's spring, whose teeth encircle
The throne and city.

Duke. (*disrobing*) Fear not. On he comes,
Still as a star robed in eclipse, until
The earthy shadow slips away. Who rises?
I'm changing: now who am I?
Thorw. Melveric!
Munsterberg, as I live and love thee!
Duke. Hush!
Is there not danger?
Thorw. Ay: we walk on ice
Over the mouth of Hell: an inch beneath us,
Dragon Rebellion lies ready to wake.
Ha! and behold him.

Enter ADALMAR.

Adalm. Lord Governor, our games are waiting for you.
Will you come with me? Base and muffled stranger,
What dost thou here? Away.
Duke. Prince Adalmar,
Where shall you see me? I will come again,
This or the next world. Thou, who carriest
The seeds of a new world, may'st understand me.
Look for me ever. There's no crack without me
In earth and all around it. Governor,
Let all things happen, as they will. Farewell:
Tremble for no one.
Adalm. Hence! The begging monk
Prates emptily.

Duke. Believe him.

Thorw. Well, lead on;
Wert thou a king, I would not more obey thee.

[*Exit with* ADALMAR.

Duke. Rebellion, treason, parricidal daggers!
This is the bark of the court dogs, that come
Welcoming home their master. My sons too,
Even my sons! O not sons, but contracts,
Between my lust and a destroying fiend,
Written in my dearest blood, whose date run out,
They are become death-warrants. Parricide,
And Murder of the heart that loved and nourished,
Be merry, ye rich fiends! Piety's dead,
And the world left a legacy to you.
Under the green-sod are your coffins packed,
So thick they break each other. The days come
When scarce a lover, for his maiden's hair,
Can pluck a stalk whose rose draws not its hue
Out of a hate-killed heart. Nature's polluted,
There's man in every secret corner of her,
Doing damned wicked deeds. Thou art old, world,
A hoary atheistic murderous star:
I wish that thou would'st die, or could'st be slain,
Hell-hearted bastard of the sun.
O that the twenty coming years were over!
Then should I be at rest, where ruined arches
Shut out the troublesome unghostly day;
And idlers might be sitting on my tomb,

Telling how I did die. How shall I die?
Fighting my sons for power; or of dotage,
Sleeping in purple pressed from filial veins;
To let my epitaph be, "Here lies he,
Who murdered his two children?" Hence cursed thought!
I will enquire the purpose of their plot:
There may be good in it, and, if there be,
I'll be a traitor too. [*Exit.*

SCENE. III.

A retired gallery in the ducal castle.

Enter ISBRAND *and* SIEGFRIED.

Isbr. Now see you how this dragon egg of ours
Swells with its ripening plot? Methinks I hear
Snaky rebellion turning restless in it,
And with its horny jaws scraping away
The shell that hides it. All is ready now:
I hold the latch-string of a new world's wicket;
One pull and it rolls in. Bid all our friends
Meet in that ruinous church-yard once again,
By moonrise: until then I'll hide myself;
For these sweet thoughts rise dimpling to my lips,
And break the dark stagnation of my features,
Like sugar melting in a glass of poison.

To-morrow, Siegfried, shalt thou see me sitting
One of the drivers of this racing earth,
With Grüssau's reins between my fingers. Ha!
Never since Hell laughed at the church, blood-drunken
From rack and wheel, has there been joy so mad
As that which stings my marrow now.

Siegfr. Good cause,
The sun-glance of a coming crown to heat you,
And give your thoughts gay colours in the steam
Of a fermenting brain.

Isbr. Not alone that.
A sceptre is smooth handling, it is true,
And one grows fat and jolly in a chair
That has a kingdom crouching under it.
With one's name on its collar, like a dog,
To fetch and carry. But the heart I have
Is a strange little snake. He drinks not wine,
When he'd be drunk, but poison: he doth fatten
On bitter hate, not love. And, O that duke!
My life is hate of him; and, when I tread
His neck into the grave, I shall, methinks,
Fall into ashes with the mighty joy,
Or be transformed into a winged star:
That will be all eternal heaven distilled
Down to one thick rich minute. This sounds madly,
But I am mad when I remember him:
Siegfried, you know not why.

Siegfr. I never knew

That you had quarrelled.

Isbr. True: but did you see
My brother's corpse? There was a wound on't, Siegfried;
He died not gently, nor in a ripe age;
And I'll be sworn it was the duke that did it,
Else he had not remained in that far land,
And sent his knights to us again.

Siegfr. I thought
He was the duke's close friend.

Isbr. Close as his blood:
A double-bodied soul they did appear,
Rather than fellow hearts.

Siegfr. I've heard it told
That they did swear and write in their best blood,
And her's they loved the most, that who died first
Should, on death's holidays, revisit him
Who still dwelt in the flesh.

Isbr. O that such bond
Would move the jailor of the grave to open
Life's gate again unto my buried brother,
But half an hour! Were I buried, like him,
There in the very garrets of death's town,
But six feet under earth, (that's the grave's sky,)
I'd jump up into life. But he's a quiet ghost;
He walks not in the churchyard after dew,
But gets to his grave betimes, burning no glow-worms,
Sees that his bones are right, and stints his worms

Most miserly. If you were murdered, Siegfried,
As he was by this duke, should it be so?
Siegfr. Here speaks again your passion: what
know we
Of death's commandments to his subject-spirits,
Who are as yet the body's citizens?
What seas unnavigable, what wild forests,
What castles, and what ramparts there may hedge
His icy frontier?
Isbr. Tower and roll what may,
There have been goblins bold who have stolen pass-
ports,
Or sailed the sea, or leaped the wall, or flung
The drawbridge down, and travelled back again.
So would my soul have done. But let it be.
At the doom-twilight shall the ducal cut-throat
Wake by a tomb-fellow he little dreamt of.
Methinks I see them rising with mixed bones,
A pair of patch-work angels.
Siegfr. What does this mean?
Isbr. A pretty piece of kidnapping, that's all.
When Melveric's heart's heart, his new-wed wife,
Upon the bed whereon she bore these sons,
Died, as a blossom does whose inmost fruit
Tears it in twain, and in its stead remains
A bitter poison-berry: when she died,
What her soul left was by her husband laid
In the marriage grave, whereto he doth consign

Himself being dead.

Siegfr. Like a true loving mate.
Is not her tomb 'mid the cathedral ruins,
Where we to-night assemble?

Isbr. Say not her's:
A changeling lies there. By black night came I,
And, while a man might change two goblet's liquors,
I laid the lips of their two graves together,
And poured my brother into hers; while she,
Being the lightest; floated and ran over.
Now lies the murdered where the loved should be;
And Melveric the dead shall dream of heaven,
Embracing his damnation. There's revenge.
But hush! here comes one of my dogs, the princes;
To work with you. [*Exit Siegfried.*
Now for another shape;
For Isbrand is the handle of the chisels
Which Fate, the turner of men's lives, doth use
Upon the wheeling world.

Enter ATHULF.

There is a passion
Lighting his cheek, as red as brother's hate:
If it be so, these pillars shall go down,
Shivering each other, and their ruins be
My step into a dukedom. Doth he speak?

Athulf. Then all the minutes of my life to come
Are sands of a great desart, into which

I'm banished broken-hearted. Amala,
I must think thee a lovely-faced murderess,
With eyes as dark and poisonous as nightshade;
Yet no, not so; if thou hadst murdered me,
It had been charitable. Thou hast slain
The love of thee, that lived in my soul's palace
And made it holy: now 'tis desolate,
And devils of abandonment will haunt it,
And call in Sins to come, and drink with them
Out of my heart. But now farewell, my love;
For thy rare sake I could have been a man
One story under god. Gone, gone art thou.
Great and voluptuous Sin now seize upon me,
Thou paramour of Hell's fire-crowned king,
That showedst the tremulous fairness of thy bosom
In heaven, and so didst ravish the best angels.
Come, pour thy spirit all about my soul,
And let a glory of thy bright desires
Play round about my temples. So may I
Be thy knight and Hell's saint for evermore.
Kiss me with fire: I'm thine.

Isbr. Doth it run so?
A bold beginning: we must keep him up to't.

Athulf. Isbrand!

Isbr. My prince.

Athulf. Come to me. Thou'rt a man
I must know more of. There is something in thee,
The deeper one doth venture in thy being,

That drags us on and down. What dost thou lead to?
Art thou a current to some unknown sea
Islanded richly, full of syren songs
And unknown bliss? Art thou the snaky opening
Of a dark cavern, where one may converse
With night's dear spirits? If thou'rt one of these,
Let me descend thee.

Isbr. You put questions to me
In an Egyptian or old magic tongue,
Which I can ill interpret.

Athulf. Passion's hieroglyphics;
Painted upon the minutes by mad thoughts,
Dungeoned in misery. Isbrand, answer me;
Art honest, or a man of many deeds
And many faces to them? Thou'rt a plotter,
A politician. Say, if there should come
A fellow, with his being just abandoned
By old desires and hopes, who would do much,—
And who doth much upon this grave-paved star,
In doing, must sin much,—would quick and straight,
Sword-straight and poison-quick, have done with doing;
Would you befriend him?

Isbr. I can lend an arm
To good bold purpose. But you know me not,
And I will not be known before my hour.
Why come you here wishing to raise the devil,
And ask me how? Where are your sacrifices?
Eye-water is not his libation, prayers

Reach him not through earth's chinks. Bold deeds
and thoughts,
What men call crimes, are his loved litany;
And from all such good angels keep us! Now sir,
What makes you fretful?
Athulf. I have lost that hope,
For which alone I lived. Henceforth my days
Are purposeless; there is no reason further
Why I should be, or should let others be;
No motive more for virtue, for forbearance,
Or anything that's good. The hourly need,
And the base bodily cravings, must be now
The aim of this deserted human engine.
Good may be in this world, but not for me;
Gentle and noble hearts, but not for me;
And happiness, and heroism, and glory,
And love, but none for me. Let me then wander
Amid their banquets, funerals, and weddings,
Like one whose living spirit is Death's Angel.
Isbr. What? You have lost your love and so turned
sour?
And who has ta'en your chair in Amala's heaven?
Athulf. My brother, my Cain; Adalmar.
Isbr. I'll help thee, prince:
When will they marry?
Athulf. I could not wish him in my rage to die
Sooner: one night I'd give him to dream hells.
To-morrow, Isbrand.

Isbr. Sudden, by my life.
But, out of the black interval, we'll cast
Something upon the moment of their joy,
Which, should it fail to blot, shall so deform it,
That they must write it further down in time.
Athulf. Let it be crossed with red.
Isbr. Trust but to me:
I'll get you bliss. But I am of a sort
Not given to affections. Sire and mother
And sister I had never, and so feel not
Why sin 'gainst them should count so doubly wicked,
This side o' th' sun. If you would wound your foe,
Get swords that pierce the mind: a bodily slice
Is cured by surgeon's butter: let true hate
Leap the flesh wall, or fling his fiery deeds
Into the soul. So he can marry, Athulf,
And then—
Athulf. Peace, wicked-hearted slave!
Darest thou tempt me? I called on thee for service,
But thou wouldst set me at a hellish work,
To cut my own damnation out of Lust:
Thou'ldst sell me to the fiend. Thou and thy master,
That sooty beast the devil, shall be my dogs,
My curs to kick and beat when I would have you.
I will not bow, nor follow at his bidding,
For his hell-throne. No: I will have a god
To serve my purpose: Hatred be his name;
But 'tis a god, divine in wickedness,

Whom I will worship. [*Exit.*

Isbr. Then go where Pride and Madness carry thee;
And let that feasted fatness pine and shrink,
Till thy ghost's pinched in the tight love-lean body.
I see his life, as in a map of rivers,
Through shadows, over rocks, breaking its way,
Until it meet his brother's, and with that
Wrestle and tumble o'er a perilous rock,
Bare as Death's shoulder: one of them is lost,
And a dark haunted flood creeps deadly on
Into the wailing Styx. Poor Amala!
A thorny rose thy life is, plucked in the dew,
And pitilessly woven with these snakes
Into a garland for the King of the grave. [*Exit.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.

An apartment in the ducal castle.

The DUKE *and* THORWALD.

Duke. LET them be married: give to Adalmar
The sweet society of woman's soul,
As we impregnate damask swords with odour
Pressed from young flowers' bosoms, so to sweeten
And purify war's lightning. For the other,
Who catches love by eyes, the court has stars,
That will take up in his tempestuous bosom
The shining place she leaves.

Thorw. It shall be done:
The bell, that will ring merrily for their bridal,
Has but few hours to score first.

Duke. Good. I have seen too
Our ripe rebellion's ringleaders. They meet
By moonrise; with them I: to-night will be
Fiends' jubilee, with heaven's spy among them.
What else was't that you asked?

Thorw. The melancholy lady you brought with you?

Duke. Thorwald, I fear her's is a broken heart.

When first I met her in the Egyptian prison,
She was the rosy morning of a woman;
Beauty was rising, but the starry grace
Of a calm childhood might be seen in her.
But since the death of Wolfram, who fell there,
Heaven and one single soul only know how,
I have not dared to look upon her sorrow.

Thorw. Methinks she's too unearthly beautiful.
Old as I am, I cannot look at her,
And hear her voice, that touches the heart's core,
Without a dread that she will fade o' th' instant.
There's too much heaven in her: oft it rises,
And, pouring out about the lovely earth,
Almost dissolves it. She is tender too;
And melancholy is the sweet pale smile,
With which she gently doth reproach her fortune.

Duke. What ladies tend her?

Thorw. My Amala; she will not often see
One of the others.

Duke. Too much solitude
Maintains her in this grief. I will look to't
Hereafter; for the present I've enough.
We must not meet again before to-morrow.

Thorw. I may have something to report . . .

Duke. Ho! Ziba.

Enter ZIBA.

Ziba. Lord of my life!

Duke. I bought this man of Afric from an Arab,
Under the shadow of a pyramid,
For many jewels. He hath skill in language;
And knowledge is in him root, flower, and fruit,
A palm with winged imagination in it,
Whose roots stretch even underneath the grave,
And on them hangs a lamp of magic science
In his soul's deepest mine, where folded thoughts
Lie sleeping on the tombs of magi dead:
So said his master when he parted with him.
I know him skilful, faithful: take him with you;
He's fit for many services.

Thorw. I'll try him:
Wilt thou be faithful, Moor?

Ziba. As soul to body.

Thorw. Then follow me. Farewell, my noble pilgrim. [*Exeunt* THORWALD *and* ZIBA.

Duke. It was a fascination, near to madness,
Which held me subjugated to that maiden.
Why do I now so coldly speak of her,
When there is nought between us? O! there is,
A deed as black as the old towers of Hell.
But hence! thou torturing weakness of remorse;
'Tis time when I am dead to think on that:
Yet my sun shines; so courage, heart, cheer up:
Who should be merrier than a secret villain?

[*Exit.*

SCENE II.

Another room in the same.

SIBYLLA *and* AMALA.

Sibyl. I would I were a fairy, Amala,
Or knew some of those winged wizard women,
Then I could bring you a more precious gift.
'Tis a wild graceful flower, whose name I know not;
Call it Sibylla's love, while it doth live;
And let it die that you may contradict it,
And say my love doth not, so bears no fruit.
Take it. I wish that happiness may ever
Flow through your days as sweetly and as still,
As did the beauty and the life to this
Out of its roots.

Amala. Thanks, my kind Sibylla:
To-morrow I will wear it at my wedding,
Since that must be.

Sibyl. Art thou then discontented?
I thought the choice was thine, and Adalmar
A noble warrior worthy of his fortune.

Amala. O yes, brave, honourable is my bridegroom,
But somewhat cold perhaps. If his wild brother
Had but more constancy and less insolence
In love, he were a man much to my heart.
But, as it is, I must, I will be happy;

And Adalmar deserves that I should love him.
But see how night o'ertakes us. Good rest, dear:
We will no more profane sleep's stillest hour.
Sibyl. Good night, then. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

A church-yard with the ruins of a spacious gothic cathedral. On the cloister walls the DANCE OF DEATH *is painted. On one side the sepulchre of the Dukes with massy carved folding doors. Moonlight.*

Enter ISBRAND *and* SIEGFRIED.

Isbr. Not here? That wolf-howled, witch-prayed, owl-sung fool,
Fat mother moon hath brought the cats their light
A whole thief's hour, and yet they are not met.
I thought the bread and milky thick-spread lies,
With which I plied them, would have drawn to head
The state's bad humours quickly.
Siegfr. They delay
Until the twilight strollers are gone home.
Isbr. That may be. This is a sweet place methinks:
These arches and their caves, now double-nighted
With heaven's and that creeping darkness, ivy,
Delight me strangely. Ruined churches oft,
As this, are crime's chief haunt, as ruined angels

Straight become fiends. This tomb too tickleth me
With its wild-rose branches. Dost remember, Siegfried,
About the buried Duchess? In this cradle
I placed the new dead: here the changeling lies.
Siegfr. Are we so near? A frightful theft!
Isbr. Fright! idiot!
Peace; there's a footstep on the pavement.

Enter the DUKE.

Welcome!
I thank you, wanderer, for coming first.
They of the town lag still.
Duke. The enterprise,
And you its head, much please me.
Isbr. You are courteous.
Duke. Better: I'm honest. But your ways and words
Are so familiar to my memory,
That I could almost think we had been friends
Since our now riper and declining lives
Undid their outer leaves.
Isbr. I can remember
No earlier meeting. What need of it? Methinks
We agree well enough: especially
As you have brought bad tidings of the Duke.
Duke. If I had time,
And less disturbed thoughts, I'd search my memory
For what thou'rt like. Now we have other matters
To talk about.

Isbr. And, thank the stingy star-shine,
I see the shades of others of our council.

Enter ADALMAR *and other conspirators.*

Though late met, well met, friends. Where stay the rest?
For we're still few here.
Adalm. They are contented
With all the steps proposed, and keep their chambers
Aloof from the suspecting crowd of eyes,
Which day doth feed with sights for nightly gossip,
Till your hour strikes.
Isbr. That's well to keep at home,
And hide, as doth Heaven's wrath, till the last minute.
Little's to say. We fall as gently on them,
As the first drops of Noah's world-washing shower
Upon the birds' wings and the leaves. Give each
A copy of this paper: it contains
A quick receipt to make a new creation
In our old dukedom. Here stands he who framed it.
Adalm. The unknown pilgrim! You have warrant, Isbrand,
For trusting him?
Isbr. I have.
Adalm. Enough. How are the citizens?
You feasted them these three days.
Isbr. And have them by the heart for't.
'Neath Grüssau's tiles sleep none, whose deepest bosom
My fathom hath not measured; none, whose thoughts

I have not made a map of. In the depth
And labyrinthine home of the still soul,
Where the seen thing is imaged, and the whisper
Joints the expecting spirit, my spies, which are
Suspicion's creeping words, have stolen in,
And, with their eyed feelers, touched and sounded
The little hiding holes of cunning thought,
And each dark crack in which a reptile purpose
Hangs in its chrysalis unripe for birth.
All of each heart I know.

Duke. O perilous boast!
Fathom the wavy caverns of all stars,
Know every side of every sand in earth,
And hold in little all the lore of man,
As a dew's drop doth miniature the sun:
But never hope to learn the alphabet,
In which the hieroglyphic human soul
More changeably is painted, than the rainbow
Upon the cloudy pages of a shower,
Whose thunderous hinges a wild wind doth turn.
Know all of each! when each doth shift his thought
More often in a minute, than the air
Dust on a summer path.

Isbr. Liquors can lay them:
Grape-juice or vein-juice.

Duke. Yet there may be one,
Whose misty mind's perspective still lies hid.

Isbr. Ha! stranger, where?

Duke. A quiet, listening, flesh-concealed soul.

Isbr. Are the ghosts eaves-dropping? None, that do live,
Listen besides ourselves.

(*A struggle behind: Siegfried drags* MARIO *forward.*)

Who's there?

Siegfr. A fellow,
Who crouched behind the bush, dipping his ears
Into the stream of your discourse.

Isbr. Come forward.

Mario. Then lead me. Were it noon, I could not find him
Whose voice commands me: in these callous hands
There is as much perception for the light,
As in the depth of my poor dayless eyes.

Isbr. Thy hand then.

Mario. Art thou leader here?

Isbr. Perchance.

Mario. Then listen, as I listened unto you,
And let my life and story end together,
If it seem good to you. A Roman am I;
A Roman in unroman times: I've slept
At midnight in our Capitolian ruins,
And breathed the ghost of our great ancient world,
Which there doth walk: and among glorious visions,
That the unquiet tombs sent forth to me,
Learned I the love of freedom. Scipio saw I.

Washing the stains of Carthage from his sword,
And his freed poet, playing on his lyre
A melody men's souls did sing unto:
Oak-bound and laurelled heads, each man a country;
And in the midst, like a sun o'er the sea,
(Each helm in the crowd gilt by a ray from him,)
Bald Julius sitting lonely in his car,
Within the circle of whose laurel wreath
All spirits of the earth and sea were spell-bound.
Down with him to the grave! Down with the god!
Stab, Cassius; Brutus, through him; through him, all!
Dead.—As he fell there was a tearing sigh:
Earth stood on him; her roots were in his heart;
They fell together. Cæsar and his world
Lie in the Capitol; and Jove lies there,
With all the gods of Rome and of Olympus;
Corpses: and does the eagle batten on them?
No; she is flown: the owl sits in her nest;
The toge is cut for cowls; and falsehood dozes
In the chair of freedom, triple-crowned beast,
King Cerberus. Thence I have come in time
To see one grave for foul oppression dug,
Though I may share it.

Isbr. Nay: thou'rt a bold heart.
Welcome among us.

Mario. I was guided hither
By one in white, garlanded like a bride,
Divinely beautiful, leading me softly;

And she doth place my hand in thine, once more
Bidding me guard her honour amongst men;
And so I will, with death to him that soils it:
For she is Liberty.

Adalm. In her name we take thee;
And for her sake welcome thee brotherly.
At the right time thou comest to us, dark man,
Like an eventful unexpected night,
Which finishes a row of plotting days,
Fulfilling their designs.

Isbr. Now then, my fellows,
No more; but to our unsuspected homes.
Good night to all who rest; hope to the watchful.
Stranger, with me. [*To Mario.*

[*Exeunt:* manet DUKE.

Duke. I'm old and desolate. O, were I dead
With thee, my wife! Oft have I lain by night
Upon thy grave, and burned with the mad wish
To raise thee up to life. Thank God, whom then
I might have thought not pitiful, for lending
No ear to such a prayer. Far better were I
Thy grave-fellow, than thou alive with me,
Amid the fears and perils of the time.

Enter ZIBA.

Who's in the dark there?

Ziba. One of the dark's colour:
Ziba, thy slave.

Duke. Come at a wish, my Arab.
Is Thorwald's house asleep yet?
Ziba. No: his lights still burn.
Duke. Go; fetch a lantern and some working fellows
With spade and pickaxe. Let not Thorwald come.
In good speed do it. [*Exit* ZIBA.
That alone is left me:
I will abandon this ungrateful country,
And leave my dukedom's earth behind me; all,
Save the small urn that holds my dead beloved:
That relic will I save from my wrecked princedom;
Beside it live and die.

(*Enter* THORWALD, ZIBA, *and gravediggers.*)

Thorwald with them!
Old friend, I hoped you were in pleasant sleep:
'Tis a late walking hour.
Thorw. I came to learn
Whether the slave spoke true. This haunted hour,
What would you with the earth? Dig you for treasure?
Duke. Ay, I do dig for treasure. To the vault,
Lift up the kneeling marble woman there,
And delve down to the coffin. Ay, for treasure:
The very dross of such a soul and body
Shall stay no longer in this land of hate.
I'll covetously rake the ashes up
Of this my love-consumed incense star,

And in a golden urn, over whose sides
An unborn life of sculpture shall be poured,
They shall stand ever on my chamber altar.
I am not Heaven's rebel; think't not of me;
Nor that I'd trouble her sepulchral sleep
For a light end. Religiously I come
To change the bed of my beloved lady,
That what remains below of us may join,
Like its immortal.

Thorw. There is no ill here:
And yet this breaking through the walls, that sever
The quick and cold, led never yet to good.

Ziba. Our work is done: betwixt the charmed moonshine
And the coffin lies nought but a nettle's shade,
That shakes its head at the deed.

Duke. Let the men go.

[*Exeunt labourers.*

Now Death, thou shadowy miser,
I am thy robber; be not merciful,
But take me in requital. There is she then;
I cannot hold my tears, thinking how altered.
O thoughts, ye fleeting, unsubstantial family!
Thou formless, viewless, and unuttered memory
How dare ye yet survive that gracious image,
Sculptured about the essence whence ye rose?
That words of her should ever dwell in me,
Who is as if she never had been born

To all earth's millions, save this one! Nay, prithee,
Let no one comfort me. I'll mourn awhile
Over her memory.

Thorw. Let the past be past,
And Lethe freeze unwept on over it.
What is, be patient with: and, with what shall be,
Silence the body-bursting spirit's yearnings.
Thou say'st that, when she died, that day was spilt
All beauty flesh could hold; that day went down
An oversouled creation. The time comes
When thou shalt find again thy blessed love,
Pure from all earth, and with the usury
Of her heaven-hoarded charms.

Duke. Is this the silence
That I commanded? Fool, thou say'st a lesson
Out of some philosophic pedant's book.
I loved no desolate soul: she was a woman,
Whose spirit I knew only through those limbs,
Those tender members thou dost dare despise;
By whose exhaustless beauty, infinite love,
Trackless expression only, I did learn
That there was aught yet viewless and eternal;
Since they could come from such alone. Where is she?
Where shall I ever see her as she was?
With the sweet smile, she smiled only on me;
With those eyes full of thoughts, none else could see?
Where shall I meet that brow and lip with mine?
Hence with thy shadows! But her warm fair body,

Where's that? There, mouldered to the dust. Old man,
If thou dost dare to mock my ears again
With thy ridiculous, ghostly consolation,
I'll send thee to the blessings thou dost speak of.

Thorw. For heaven's and her sake restrain this passion.

Duke. She died. But Death is old and half worn out:
Are there no chinks in't? Could she not come to me?
Ghosts have been seen; but never in a dream,
After she'd sighed her last, was she the blessing
Of these desiring eyes. All, save my soul,
And that but for her sake, were his who knew
The spell of Endor, and could raise her up.

Thorw. Another time that thought were impious.
Unreasonable longings, such as these,
Fit not your age and reason. In sorrow's rage
Thou dost demand and bargain for a dream,
Which children smile at in their tales.

Ziba. Smile ignorance!
But, sure as men have died strong necromancy
Hath set the clock of time and nature back;
And made Earth's rooty, ruinous, grave-floored caverns
Throb with the pangs of birth. Ay, were I ever
Where the accused innocent did pray
Acquittal from dead lips, I would essay
My sires' sepulchral magic.

Duke. Slave, thou tempt'st me
To lay my sword's point to thy throat, and say

" Do it or die thyself."

Thorw. Prithee, come in.
To cherish hopes like these is either madness,
Or a sure cause of it. Come in and sleep:
To morrow we'll talk further.

Duke. Go in thou.
Sleep blinds no eyes of mine, till I have proved
This slave's temptation.

Thorw. Then I leave you to him.
Good night again. [*Exit Thorwald.*

Duke. Good night, and quiet slumbers.
Now then, thou juggling African, thou shadow,
Think'st thou I will not murder thee this night,
If thou again dare tantalize my soul
With thy accursed hints, thy lying boasts?
Say, shall I stab thee?

Ziba. Then thou murder'st truth.
I spoke of what I'd do.

Duke. You told ghost-lies,
And held me for a fool because I wept.
Now, once more, silence: or to-night I shed
Drops royaller and redder than those tears.

Enter ISBRAND *and* SIEGFRIED.

Isbr. Pilgrim, not yet abed? Why, ere you've time
To lay your cloak down, heaven will strip off night,
And show her daily bosom.

Duke. Sir, my eyes

Never did feel less appetite for sleep:
I and my slave intend to watch till morrow.
Isbr. Excellent. You're a fellow of my humour.
I never sleep o' nights: the black sky likes me,
And the soul's solitude, while half mankind
Lie quiet in earth's shade and rehearse death.
Come, let's be merry: I have sent for wine,
And here it comes. [*It is brought in.*
These mossy stones about us
Will serve for stools, although they have been turrets,
Which scarce aught touched but sunlight, or the claw
Of the strong-winged eagles, who lived here
And fed on battle-bones. Come sit, sir stranger;
Sit too, my devil-coloured one; here's room
Upon my rock. Fill, Siegfried
Siegfr. Yellow wine,
And rich be sure. How like you it?
Duke. Better ne'er wetted lip.
Isbr. Then fill again. Come, hast no song to-night,
Siegfried? Nor you, my midnight of a man?
I'm weary of dumb toping.
Siegfr. Yet you sing not.
My songs are staler than the cuckoo's tune:
And you, companions?
Duke. We are quite unused.
Isbr. Then you shall have a ballad of my making.
Siegfr. How? do you rhyme too?
Isbr. Sometimes, in rainy weather.

Here's what I made one night, while picking poisons
To make the rats a sallad.

Duke. And what's your tune?

Isbr. What is the night-bird's tune, wherewith she startles
The bee out of his dream, that turns and kisses
The inmost of his flower and sleeps again?
What is the lobster's tune when he is boiling?
I hate your ballads that are made to come
Round like a squirrel's cage, and round again.
We nightingales sing boldly from our hearts:
So listen to us.

Song by Isbrand.

Squats on a toad-stool under a tree
A bodiless childfull of life in the gloom,
Crying with frog voice, "What shall I be?
Poor unborn ghost, for my mother killed me
Scarcely alive in her wicked womb.
What shall I be? shall I creep to the egg
That's cracking asunder yonder by Nile,
And with eighteen toes,
And a snuff-taking nose,
Make an Egyptian crocodile?
Sing,—Catch a mummy by the leg
And crunch him with an upper jaw,
Wagging tail and clenching claw;
Take a bill-full from my craw,

Neighbour-raven, caw, O cáw,
Grunt, my crocky, pretty maw!'

" Swine, shall I be you? Thou'rt a dear dog;
But for a smile, and kiss, and pout,
I much prefer *your* black-lipped snout,
Little, gruntless, fairy hog,
Godson of the hawthorn hedge.
For, when Ringwood snuffs me out,
And 'gins my tender paunch to grapple,
Sing, 'Twixt your ancles visage wedge,
And roll up like an apple.'

" Serpent Lucifer, how do you do?
Of your worms and your snakes I'd be one or two;
For in this dear planet of wool and of leather
'Tis pleasant to need neither shirt, sleeve, nor shoe,
And have arm, leg, and belly together.
Then aches your head, or are you lazy?
Sing, 'Round your neck your belly wrap,
Tail-a-top, and make your cap
Any bee and daisy.'

" I'll not be a fool, like the nightingale
Who sits up all midnight without any ale,
Making a noise with his nose;
Nor a camel, although 'tis a beautiful back;
Nor a duck, notwithstanding the music of quack,

And the webby, mud-patting toes.
I'll be a new bird with the head of an ass,
Two pigs' feet, two mens' feet, and two of a hen;
Devil-winged; dragon-bellied; grave-jawed, because grass
Is a beard that's soon shaved, and grows seldom again
Before it is summer; so cow all the rest;
The new Dodo is finished. O! come to my nest."

Siegfr. A noble hymn to the belly gods indeed:
Would that Pythagoras heard thee, boy!
Isbr. I fear you flatter: 'tis perhaps a little
Too sweet and tender, but that is the fashion;
Besides my failing is too much sentiment.
Fill the cups up, and pass them round again;
I'm not my nightly self yet. There's creation
In these thick yellow drops. By my faith, Siegfried,
A man of meat and water's a thin beast,
But he who sails upon such waves as these
Begins to be a fellow. The old gods
Were only men and wine.
Siegfr. Here's to their memory.
They're dead, poor sinners, all of them but Death,
Who has laughed down Jove's broad, ambrosian brow,
Furrowed with earth-quake frowns: and not a ghost
Haunts the gods' town upon Olympus' peak.
Isbr. Methinks that earth and heaven are grown bad neighbours,

And have blocked up the common door between them.
Five hundred years ago had we sat here
So late and lonely, many a jolly ghost
Would have joined company.
Siegfr. To trust in story,
In the old times Death was a feverish sleep,
In which men walked. The other world was cold
And thinly-peopled, so life's emigrants
Came back to mingle with the crowds of earth:
But now great cities are transplanted thither,
Memphis, and Babylon, and either Thebes,
And Priam's towery town with its one beech.
The dead are most and merriest: so be sure
There will be no more haunting, till their towns
Are full to the garret; then they'll shut their gates,
To keep the living out, and perhaps leave
A dead or two between both kingdoms.
Duke. Ziba;
Hear'st thou, phantastic mountebank, what's said?
Ziba. Nay: as I live and shall be one myself,
I can command them hither.
Isbr. Whom?
Ziba. Departed spirits.
Duke. He who dares think that words of human speech,
A chalky ring with monstrous figures in it,
Or smoky flames can draw the distant souls
Of those, whose bones and monuments are dust,

Must shudder at the restless, broken death,
Which he himself in age shall fall into.

Isbr. Suppose we four had lived in Cyrus' time,
And had our graves under Egyptian grass,
D'you think, at whistling of a necromant,
I'd leave my wine or subterranean love
To know his bidding? Mummies cannot pull
The breathing to them, when they'd learn the news.

Ziba. Perhaps they do, in sleep, in swoons, in fevers:
But your belief's not needed.
[*To the Duke*]. You remember
The damsel dark at Mecca, whom we saw
Weeping the death of a pale summer flower,
Which her spear-slain beloved had tossed to her
Galloping into battle?

Duke. Happy one!
Whose eyes could yield a tear to soothe her sorrows.
But what's that to the point?

Ziba. As those tears fell,
A magic scholar passed; and, their cause known,
Bade her no longer mourn: he called a bird,
And bade it with its bill select a grain
Out of the gloomy death-bed of the blossom.
The feathery bee obeyed; and scraped aside
The sand, and dropped the seed into its grave:
And there the old plant lay, still and forgotten,
By its just budding grandsons; but not long:
For soon the floral necromant brought forth

A wheel of amber, (such may Clotho use
When she spins lives,) and, as he turned and sung,
The mould was cracked and shouldered up; there came
A curved stalk, and then two leaves unfurled,
And slow and straight between them there arose,
Ghostily still, again the crowned flower.
Is it not easier to raise a man,
Whose soul strives upward ever, than a plant,
Whose very life stands halfway on death's road,
Asleep and buried half?

Duke. This was a cheat:
The herb was born anew out of a seed,
Not raised out of a bony skeleton.
What tree is man the seed of?

Ziba. Of a ghost;
Of his night-coming, tempest-waved phantom:
And even as there is a round dry grain
In a plant's skeleton, which being buried
Can raise the herb's green body up again;
So is there such in man, a seed-shaped bone,
Aldabaron, called by the Hebrews Luz,
Which, being laid into the ground, will bear
After three thousand years the grass of flesh,
The bloody, soul-possessed weed called man.

Isbr. Let's have a trick then in all haste, I prithee.
The world's man-crammed; we want no more of them:
But show me, if you will, some four-legged ghost;
Rome's mother, the she-wolf; or the fat goat

From whose dugs Jove sucked godhead; any thing;
Pig, bullock, goose; for they have goblins too,
Else ours would have no dinner.

Ziba. Were you worthy,
I'd raise a spirit whom your conscience knows;
And he would drag thee down into that world,
Whither thou didst send him.

Isbr. Thanks for the offer.
Our wine's out, and these clouds, whose blackest wombs
Seem swelling with a second centaur-birth,
Threaten plain water. So good night.

[*Exit with Siegfried.*

Duke. Obstinate slave! Now that we are alone,
Durst thou again say life and soul has lifted
The dead man from the grave, and sent him walking
Over the earth?

Ziba. I say it, and will add
Deed to my word, not oath. Within what tomb
Dwells he, whom you would call?

Duke. There. But stand off!
If you do juggle with her holy bones,
By God I'll murder thee. I don't believe you,
For here next to my heart I wear a bond,
Written in the blood of one who was my friend,
In which he swears that, dying first, he would
Borrow some night his body from the ground,
To visit me once more. One day we quarrelled,
Swords hung beside us and we drew: he fell.

Yet never has his bond or his revenge
Raised him to my bed-side, haunting his murderer,
Or keeping blood-sealed promise to his friend.
Does not this prove you lie?
Ziba. 'Tis not my spell:
Shall I try that with him?
Duke. No, no! not him.
The heavy world press on him, where he lies,
With all her towers and mountains!
Ziba. Listen, lord.
Time was when Death was young and pitiful,
Though callous now by use: and then there dwelt,
In the thin world above, a beauteous Arab,
Unmated yet and boyish. To his couch
At night, which shone so starry through the boughs,
A pale flower-breathed nymph with dewy hair
Would often come, but all her love was silent;
And ne'er by day-light could he gaze upon her,
For ray by ray, as morning came, she paled,
And like a snow of air dissolv'd i' th' light,
Leaving behind a stalk with lilies hung,
Round which her womanish graces had assembled.
So did the early love-time of his youth
Pass with delight: but when, compelled at length,
He left the wilds and woods for riotous camps
And cities full of men, he saw no more,
Tho' prayed and wept for, his old bed-time vision,
The pale dissolving maiden. He would wander

Sleepless about the waste, benighted fields,
Asking the speechless shadows of his thoughts
"Who shared my couch? Who was my love? Where
is she?"
Thus passing through a grassy burial-ground,
Wherein a new-dug grave gaped wide for food,
"Who was she?" cried he, and the earthy mouth
Did move its nettle-bearded lips together,
And said "'Twas I—I, Death: behold our child!"
The wanderer looked, and on the lap of the pit
A young child slept as at a mother's breast.
He raised it and he reared it. From that infant
My race, the death-begotten, draw their blood:
Our prayer for the diseased works more than medicine;
Our blessings oft secure grey hairs and happy
To new-born infants; and, in case of need,
The dead and gone are re-begotten by us,
And motherlessly born to second life.

Duke. I've heard your tale. Now exorcise: but,
mark!
If thou dost dare to make my heart thy fool,
I'll send thee to thy grave-mouthed grandam, Arab.

Ziba. Wilt thou submit unmurmuring to all evils,
Which this recall to a forgotten being
May cause to thee and thine?

Duke. With all my soul,
So I may take the good.

Ziba. And art thou ready

To follow, if so be its will, the ghost,
Whom you will re-imbody, to the place
Which it doth now inhabit?

Duke. My first wish.
Now to your sorcery: and no more conditions,
In hopes I may break off. All ill be mine,
Which shall the world revisit with the being
That lies within.

Ziba. Enough. Upon this scroll
Are written words, which read, even in a whisper,
Would in the air create another star;
And, more than thunder-tongued storms in the sky,
Make the old world to quake and sweat with fear;
And, as the chilly damps of her death-swoon
Fall and condense, they to the moon reflect
The forms and colours of the pale old dead.
Laid there among the bones, and left to burn,
With sacred spices, its keen vaporous power
Would draw to life the earliest dead of all,
Swift as the sun doth ravish a dew-drop
Out of a flower. But see, the torch-flame dies:
How shall I light it?

Duke. Here's my useless blood-bond;
These words, that should have waked illumination
Within a corpse's eyes, will make a tinder,
Whose sparks might be of life instead of fire.
Burn it.

Ziba. An incense for thy senses, god of those,

To whom life is as death to us; who were,
Ere our grey ancestors wrote history;
When these our ruined towers were in the rock;
And our great forests, which do feed the sea
With storm-souled fleets, lay in an acorn's cup:
When all was seed that now is dust; our minute
Invisibly far future. Send thy spirit
From plant of the air, and from the air and earth,
And from earth's worms, and roots, again to gather
The dispersed being, 'mid whose bones I place
The words which, spoken, shall destroy death's king-
dom,
And which no voice, but thunder, can pronounce.
Marrow fill bone, and vine-like veins run round them,
And flesh, thou grass, mown wert thou long ago,—
Now comes the brown dry after-crop. Ho! ghost!
There's thy old heart a-beating, and thy life
Burning on the old hearth. Come home again!

Duke. Hush! Do you hear a noise?

Ziba. It is the sound
Of the ghost's foot on Jacob's ladder-rungs.

Duke. More like the tread upon damp stony steps
Out of a dungeon. Dost thou hear a door
Drop its great bolt and grate upon its hinges?

Ziba. Serpentine Hell! That is thy staircase echo, [*aside.*
And thy jaws' groaning. What betides it?

Duke. Thou human murder-time of night,

What hast thou done?

Ziba. My task: give me to death, if the air has not
What was the earth's but now. Ho there! i' th' vault.

A Voice. Who breaks my death?

Ziba. Draw on thy body, take up thy old limbs,
And then come forth tomb-born.

Duke. One moment's peace!
Let me remember what a grace she had,
Even in her dying hour: her soul set not,
But at its noon Death like a cloud came o'er it,
And now hath passed away. O come to me,
Thou dear returned spirit of my wife;
And, surely as I clasp thee once again,
Thou shalt not die without me.

Ziba. Ho! there, Grave,
Is life within thee?

The Voice. Melveric, I am here.

Duke. Did'st hear that whisper? Open, and let in
The blessing to my eyes, whose subtle breath
Doth penetrate my heart's quick; and let me hear
That dearest name out of those dearest lips.
Who comes back to my heart?

(MANDRAKE *runs out of the sepulchre.*)

Ziba. Momus of Hell, what's this?

Duke. Is this thy wretched jest, thou villanous fool?
But I will punish thee, by heaven; and thou too
[*To Mandrake.*

Shalt soon be what thou shouldst have better acted.

Mandr. Excuse me: as you have thought proper to call me to the living, I shall take the liberty of remaining alive. If you want to speak to another ghost, of longer standing, look into the old lumber-room of a vault again: some one seems to be putting himself together there. Good night, gentlemen, for I must travel to Egypt once more. [*Exit.*

Duke. Thou disappointed cheat! Was this a fellow,
Whom thou hadst hired to act a spectral part?
Thou see'st how well he does it. But away!
Or I will teach thee better to rehearse it.

Zibà. Death is a hypocrite then, a white dissembler,
Like all that doth seem good! I am put to shame.
[*Exit.*

Duke. Deceived and disappointed vain desires!
Why laugh I not, and ridicule myself?
'Tis still, and cold, and nothing in the air
But an old grey twilight, or of eve or morn,
I know not which, dim as futurity,
And sad and hoary as the ghostly past,
Fills up the space. Hush! not a wind is there,
Not a cloud sails over the battlements,
Not a bell tolls the hour. Is there an hour?
Or is not all gone by, which here did hive,
Of men and their life's ways? Could I but hear
The ticking of a clock, or some one breathing,
Or e'en a cricket's chirping, or the grating

Of the old gates amidst the marble tombs,
I should be sure that this was still the world.
Hark! Hark! Doth nothing stir?
No light, and still no light, besides this ghost
That mocks the dawn, unaltered? Still no sound?
No voice of man? No cry of beast? No rustle
Of any moving creature? And sure I feel
That I remain the same: no more round blood-drops
Roll joyously along my pulseless veins:
The air I seem to breathe is still the same:
And the great dreadful thought, that now comes o'er me,
Must remain ever as it is, unchanged.—
This moment doth endure for evermore;
Eternity hath overshadowed time;
And I alone am left of all that lived,
Pent in this narrow, horrible conviction.
Ha! the dead soon will wake! My Agnes, rise;
Rise up, my wife! One look, ere Wolfram comes;
Quick, or it is too late: the murdered hasten:
My best-beloved, come once to my heart . .
But ah! who art thou?

(*The gates of the sepulchre fly open and discover* WOLFRAM.)

Wolfr. Wolfram, murderer,
To whose heart thou didst come with horrid purpose.

Duke. Lie of my eyes, begone! Art thou not dead?
Are not the worms, that ate thy marrow, dead?
What dost thou here, thou wretched goblin fool?

Think'st thou, I fear thee? Thou man-mocking air,
Thou art not truer than a mirror's image,
Nor half so lasting. Back again to coffin,
Thou baffled idiot spectre, or haunt cradles:
Or stay, and I'll laugh at thee. Guard thyself,
If thou pretendest life.

Wolfr. Is this thin air, that thrusts thy sword away?
Flesh, bones, and soul, and blood that thou stol'st from me,
Upon thy summons, bound by heart-red letters,
Here Wolfram stands: what wouldst thou?

Duke. What sorcery else,
But that cursed compact, could have made full Hell
Boil over, and spill thee, thou topmost damned?
But down again! I'll see no more of thee.
Hound to thy kennel to your coffin bones,
Ghost to thy torture!

Wolfr. Thou returnest with me;
So make no hurry. I will stay awhile
To see how the old world goes, feast and be merry,
And then to work again.

Duke. Darest thou stand there,
Thou shameless vapour, and assert thyself,
While I defy, and question, and deride thee?
The stars, I see them dying: clearly all
The passage of this night remembrance gives me,
And I think coolly: but my brain is mad,
Else why behold I that? Is't possible

Thou'rt true, and worms have vomited thee up
Upon this rind of earth? No; thou shalt vanish.
Was it for this I hated thee and killed thee?
I'll have thee dead again, and hounds and eagles
Shall be thy graves, since this old, earthy one
Hath spat thee out for poison.

Wolfr. Thou, old man,
Art helpless against me. I shall not harm thee;
So lead me home. I am not used to sunlight,
And morn's a-breaking.

Duke. Then there is rebellion
Against all kings, even Death. Murder's worn out
And full of holes; I'll never make't the prison
Of what I hate, again. Come with me, spectre;
If thou wilt live against the body's laws,
Thou murderer of Nature, it shall be
A question, which haunts which, while thou dost last.
So come with me. [*Exeunt.*

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ACT IV.

SCENE I.

An apartment in the Governor's palace.

The DUKE *and an attendant.*

Duke. YOUR lord sleeps yet?

Attend. An hour ago he rose:
About this time he's busy with his falcons,
And then he takes his meal.

Duke. I'll wait for him.

[*Exit Attendant.*

How strange it is that I can live to day;
Nay look like other men, who have been sleeping
On quiet pillows and not dreamt! Methinks
The look of the world's a lie, a face made up
O'er graves and fiery depths; and nothing's true
But what is horrible. If man could see
The perils and diseases that he elbows,
Each day he walks a mile; which catch at him,
Which fall behind and graze him as he passes;
Then would he know that Life's a single pilgrim,
Fighting unarmed amongst a thousand soldiers.
It is this infinite invisible
Which we must learn to know, and yet to scorn,
And, from the scorn of that, regard the world

As from the edge of a far star. Now then
I feel me in the thickest of the battle;
The arrow-shower pours down, swords hew, mines open
Their ravenous mouths about me; it rains death;
But cheerly I defy the braggart storm,
And set my back against a rock, to fight
Till I am bloodily won.

Enter THORWALD.

Thorw. How? here already?
I'm glad on't, and to see you look so clear
After that idle talk. How did it end?

Duke. Scarcely as I expected.

Thorw. Dared he conjure?
But surely you have seen no ghost last night:
You seem to have supped well and slept.

Duke. We'd wine,
And some wild singing. Of the necromancy
We'll speak no more. Ha! Do you see a shadow?

Thorw. Ay: and the man who casts it.

Duke. Tis true; my eyes are dim and dull with watching.
This castle that fell down, and was rebuilt
With the same stones, is the same castle still;
And so with him.

Enter WOLFRAM.

Thorw. What mean you?

Duke. Impudent goblin!

Darest thou the day-light? Dar'st be seen of more
Than me, the guilty? Vanish! Though thou'rt there,
I'll not believe I see thee. Or is this
The work of necromantic Conscience? Ha!
'Tis nothing but a picture: curtain it.
Strange visions, my good Thorwald, are begotten,
When Sleep o'ershadows waking.

Thorw. Who's the stranger?
You speak as one familiar.

Duke. Is aught here
Besides our-selves? I think not.

Thorw. Yet you gaze
Straight on the man.

Duke. A villanous friend of mine;
Of whom I must speak well, and still permit him
To follow me. So thou'rt yet visible,
Thou grave-breaker! If thou wilt haunt me thus,
I'll make thee my fool, ghost, my jest and zany.
'Tis his officious gratitude that pains me:
The carcase owes to me its ruinous life,
(Between whose broken walls and hideous arches
You see the other world's grey spectral light;)
Therefore he clings to me so ivily.
Now, goblin, lie about it. 'Tis in truth
A faithful slave.

Wolfr. If I had come unsummoned,
If I had burst into your sunny world,
And stolen visibility and birth

Against thy prayers, thus shouldst thou speak to me:
But thou hast forced me up, remember that.
I am no fiend, no foe; then let me hear
These stern and tyrannous rebukes no more.
Wilt thou be with the born, that have not died?
I vanish: now a short farewell. I fade;
The air doth melt me, and, my form being gone,
I'm all thou see'st not. [*He disappears.*

Duke. Dissolved like snow in water! Be my cloud,
My breath, and fellow soul, I can bear all,
As long as thou art viewless to these others.
Now there are two of us. How stands the bridal?

Thorw. This evening 'twill be held.

Duke. Good; and our plot
Leaps on your pleasure's lap; here comes my gang;
Away with you. [*Exit Thorwald.*
I do begin to feel
As if I were a ghost among the men,
As all, whom I loved, are; for their affections
Hang on things new, young, and unknown to me:
And that I am is but the obstinate will
Of this my hostile body.

Enter ISBRAND, ADALMAR, *and* SIEGFRIED.

Isbr. Come, let's be doing: we have talked whole nights
Of what an instant, with one flash of action,
Should have performed: you wise and speaking people

Need some one, with a hatchet-stroke, to free
The Pallas of your Jove-like headaches.
Duke. Patience:
Fledging comes after hatching. One day more:
This evening brings the wedding of the prince,
And with it feasts and maskings. In mid bowls
And giddy dances let us fall upon them.
Siegfr. Well thought: our enemies will be assembled.
Isbr. I like to see Ruin at dinner time,
Firing his cannons with the match they lit
For the buck-roasting faggots. But what say you
To what concerns you most? [*to Adalmar.*
Adalm. That I am ready
To hang my hopeful crown of happiness
Upon the temple of the public good.
Isbr. Of that no need. Your wedding shall be finished;
Or left, like a full goblet yet untasted,
To be drunk up with greater thirst from toil.
I'll wed too when I've time. My honest pilgrim,
The melancholy lady, you brought with you,
Looks on me with an eye of much content:
I have sent some rhymed love-letters unto her,
In my best style. D' you think we're well matched?
Adalm. How? Would you prop the peach upon the upas?
Isbr. True: I am rough, a surly bellowing storm;

But fallen, never tear did hang more tender
Upon the eye-lash of a love-lorn girl,
Or any Frenchman's long, frost-bitten nose,
Than in the rosecup of that lady's life
I shall lie trembling. Pilgrim, plead for me
With a tongue love-oiled.

Duke. Win her, sir, and wear her.
But you and she are scarcely for one world.

Isbr. Enough; I'll wed her. Siegfried, come with me;
We'll talk about it in the rainy weather.
Pilgrim, anon I find you in the ruins,
Where we had wine last night.

[*Exit with Siegfried.*

Adalm. Would that it all were over, and well over!
Suspicions flash upon me here and there:
But we're in the mid ocean without compass,
Winds wild, and billows rolling us away:
Onwards with hope!

Duke. Of what? Youth, is it possible
That thou art toiling here for liberty,
And others' welfare, and such virtuous shadows
As philosophic fools and beggars raise
Out of the world that's gone? Thou'lt sell thy birthright
For incense praise, less tickling to the sense
Than Esau's pottage steam?

Adalm. No, not for these,
Fame's breath and praise, its shadow. 'Tis my humour

To do what's right and good.

Duke. Thou'rt a strange prince.
Why all the world, except some fifty lean ones,
Would, in your place and at your ardent years,
Seek the delight that lies in woman's limbs
And mountain-covering grapes. What's to be royal,
Unless you pick those girls, whose cheeks you fancy,
As one would cowslips? And see hills and valleys
Mantled in autumn with the snaky plant,
Whose juice is the right madness, the best godship?
Have men, and beasts, and woods, with flower and fruit
From all the earth, one's slaves; bid the worm eat
Your next year's purple from the mulberry leaf,
The tiger shed his skin to line your car,
And men die, thousands in a day, for glory?
Such things should kings bid from their solitude
Upon the top of Man. Justice and Good,
All penniless, base, earthy kind of fellows,
So low, one wonders they were not born dogs,
Can do as well, alas!

Adalm. There's cunning in thee.
A year ago this doctrine might have pleased me:
But since, I have remembered, in my childhood
My teachers told me that I was immortal,
And had within me something like a god;
Now, by believing firmly in that promise,
I do enjoy a part of its fulfilment,
And, antedating my eternity,

Act as I were immortal.

Duke. Think of *now*.

This Hope and Memory are wild horses, tearing
The precious *now* to pieces. Grasp and use
The breath within you; for you know not, whether
That wind about the trees brings you one more.
Thus far yourself. But tell me, hath no other
A right, which you would injure? Is this sceptre,
Which you would stamp to dust and let each varlet
Pick out his grain of power; this great spirit,
This store of mighty men's concentrate souls,
Which kept your fathers in god's breath, and you
Would waste in the wide, smoky, pestilent air
For every dog to snuff in; is this royalty
Your own? O! when you were a boy, young prince,
I would have laid my heart upon your spirit:
Now both are broken.

Adalm. Father?

Duke. Yes, my son:

We'll live to be most proud of those two names.
Go on thy way: I follow and o'erlook.
This pilgrim's shape will hang about and guard thee
Being but the shadow of my sunniness,
Looking in patience through a cloudy time.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II. *A garden.*

SIBYLLA *and* ATHULF.

Athulf. From me no comfort. O you specious creatures,
So poisonous to the eye! Go! you sow madness:
And one of you, although I cannot curse her,
Will make my grave a murderer's. I'll do nought;
But rather drink and revel at your bridal.
And why not Isbrand? Many such a serpent
Doth lick heaven's dew out of as sweet a flower.
Wed, wed! I'll not prevent it.
Sibyl. I beseech thee,
If there be any tie of love between thee
And her who is thy brother's.
Athulf. Curse the word!
And trebly curse the deed that made us brothers!
O that I had been born the man I hate!
Any, at least, but one. Then—sleep my soul;
And walk not in thy sleep to do the act,
Which thou must ever dream of. My fair lady,
I would not be the reason of one tear
Upon thy bosom, if the times were other;
If women were not women. When the world
Turns round the other way, and doing Cain-like

Passes as merrily as doing Eve-like,
Then I'll be pitiful. Let go my hand;
It is a mischievous limb, and may run wild,
Doing the thing its master would not. [*Exit.*

Sibyl. Then no one hears me. O! the world's too loud,
With trade and battle, for my feeble cry
To rouse the living. The invisible
Hears best what is unspoken; and my thoughts
Have long been calling comfort from the grave.

(WOLFRAM *suddenly appears, in the garment of a monk.*)

Wolfr. Lady, you called me.
Sibyl. I?
Wolfr. The word was *Comfort:*
A name by which the master, whose I am,
Is named by many wise and many wretched.
Will you with me to the place where sighs are not;
A shore of blessing, which disease doth beat
Sea-like, and dashes those whom he would wreck
Into the arms of Peace? But ah! what say I?
You're young and must be merry in the world;
Have friends to envy, lovers to betray you;
And feed young children with the blood of your heart,
Till they have sucked up strength enough to break it.
Poor woman! Art thou nothing but the straw
Bearing a heavy poison, and, that shed,

Cut down to be stamped on? But thou'rt i' th' blade;
The green and milky sun-deceived grass:
So stand till the scythe comes, take shine and shower,
And the wind fell you gently.

Sibyl. Do not go.
Speak as at first you did; there was in the words
A mystery and music, which did thaw
The hard old rocky world into a flood,
Whereon a swan-drawn boat seemed at my feet
Rocking on its blue billows; and I heard
Harmonies, and breathed odours from an isle,
Whose flowers cast tremulous shadows in the day
Of an immortal sun, and crowd the banks
Whereon immortal human kind doth couch.
This I have dreamt before: your speech recalled it.
So speak to soothe me once again.

Wolfr. (*aside*) Snake Death,
Sweet as the cowslip's honey is thy whisper:
O let this dove escape thee! I'll not plead,
I will not be thy suitor to this innocent:
Open thy craggy jaws; speak, coffin-tongued,
Persuasions through the dancing of the yew-bough
And the crow's nest upon it. (*aloud*) Lady fair,
Listen not to me, look not on me more.
I have a fascination in my words,
A magnet in my look, which drags you downwards,
From hope and life. You set your eyes upon me,
And think I stand upon this earth beside you:

Alas! I am upon a jutting stone,
Which crumbles down the steeps of an abyss;
And you, above me far, grow wild and giddy:
Leave me, or you must fall into the deep.

Sibyl. I leave thee never, nor thou me. O no!
You know not what a heart you spurn away;
How good it might be, if love cherished it;
And how deserted 'tis; ah! so deserted,
That I have often wished a ghost would come,
Whose love might haunt it. Turn not thou, the last.
Thou see'st I'm young: how happy might I be!
And yet I only wish these tears I shed
Were raining on my grave. If thou'lt not love me,
Then do me the next office; show me only
The shortest path to solitary death.

Wolfr. You're moved to wildness, maiden. Beg not of me.
I can grant nothing good: quiet thyself,
And seek heaven's help. Farewell.

Sibyl. Wilt thou leave me?
Unpitying, aye unmoved in cheek and heart,
Stern, selfish mortal? Hast thou heard my prayer;
Hast seen me weep; hast seen my limbs to quiver,
Like a storm-shaken tree over its roots?
Art thou alive, and canst thou see this wretch,
Without a care?

Wolfr. Thou see'st I am unmoved:
Infer the truth.

Sibyl. Thy soul indeed is dead.

Wolfr. My soul, my soul! O that it wore not now
The semblance of a garb it hath cast off;
O that it was disrobed of these mock limbs,
Shed by a rocky birth unnaturally,
Long after their decease and burial!
O woe that I must speak! for she, who hears,
Is marked for no more breathing. There are histories
Of women, nature's bounties, who disdained
The mortal love of the embodied man,
And sought the solitude which spirits cast
Around their darksome presence. These have loved,
Wooed, wedded, and brought home their moonstruck brides
Unto the world-sanded eternity.
Hast faith in such reports?

Sibyl. So lonely am I,
That I dare wish to prove them true.

Wolfr. Dar'st die?
A grave-deep question. Answer it religiously.

Sibyl. With him I loved, I dared.

Wolfr. With me and for me.
I am a ghost. Tremble not; fear not me.
The dead are ever good and innocent,
And love the living. They are cheerful creatures,
And quiet as the sunbeams, and most like,
In grace and patient love and spotless beauty,
The new-born of mankind. 'Tis better too

To die, as thou art, young, in the first grace
And full of beauty, and so be remembered
As one chosen from the earth to be an angel;
Not left to droop and wither, and be borne
Down by the breath of time. Come then, Sibylla,
For I am Wolfram!

Sibyl. Thou art come to fetch me!
It is indeed a proof of boundless love,
That thou hadst need of me even in thy bliss.
I go with thee. O Death! I am thy friend,
I struggle not with thee, I love thy state:
Thou canst be sweet and gentle, be so now;
And let me pass praying away into thee,
As twilight still does into starry night.

[*The scene closes.*

Voices in the air.

As sudden thunder
Pierces night;
As magic wonder,
Wild affright,
Rives asunder
Men's delight:
Our ghost, our corpse; and we
Rise to be.

As flies the lizard
Serpent fell;

As goblin vizard,
At the spell
Of the wizard,
Sinks to hell:
Our life, our laugh, our lay
Pass away.

As wake the morning
Trumpets bright;
As snow-drop, scorning
Winter's might,
Rises warning
Like a spright:
We buried, dead, and slain
Rise again.

SCENE III.

A garden, under the windows of Amala's apartment.

ATHULF.

Athulf. Once more I'll see thee, love, speak to thee,
hear thee;
And then my soul shall cut itself a door
Out of this planet. I've been wild and heartless,
Laughed at the feasts where Love had never place,
And pledged my light faith to a hundred women,

Forgotten all next day. A worthless life,
A life ridiculous! Day after day,
Folly on folly! But I'll not repent.
Remorse and weeping shall not be my virtues:
Let fools do both, and, having had their evil,
And tickled their young hearts with the sweet sins
That feather Cupid's shafts, turn timid, weep,
Be penitent. Now the wild banquet's o'er,
Wine spilt, lights out, I cannot brook the world,
It is so silent. And that poisonous reptile,
My past self, is a villain I'll not pardon.
I hate and will have vengeance on my soul:
Satirical Murder, help me . . Ha! I am
Devil-inspired: out with you, ye fool's thoughts!
You're young, strong, healthy yet; years may you live:
Why yield to an ill-humoured moment? No!
I'll cut his throat across, make her my wife;
Huzza! for a mad life! and be a Duke!
I was born for sin and love it.
O thou villain,
Die, die! Have patience with me, heavenly Mercy!
Let me but once more look upon that blessing,
Then can I calmly offer up to thee
This crime-haired head.

Enter AMALA *as bride, with a bridesmaid.*

O beauty, beauty!
Thou shed'st a moony night of quiet through me.

Thanks! Now I am resolved.

Bridesm. Amala, good night:
Thou'rt happy. In these high delightful times,
It does the human heart much good to think
On deepest woe, which may be waiting for us,
Masked even in a marriage-hour.

Amala. Thou'rt timid:
'Tis well to trust in the good genius.
Are not our hearts, in these great pleasures godded,
Let out awhile to their eternity,
And made prophetic? The past is pale to me;
But I do see my future plain of life,
Full of rejoicings and of harvest-dances,
Clearly, it is so sunny. A year hence
I'll laugh at you for this, until you weep.
Good night, sweet fear.

Bridesm. Take this flower from me,
(A white rose, fitting for a wedding-gift,)
And lay it on your pillow. Pray to live
So fair and innocently; pray to die,
Leaf after leaf, so softly. [*Exit.*

Amala. —Now to my chamber; yet an hour or two,
In which years must be sown.

Athulf. Stay Amala;
An old acquaintance brings a greeting to you,
Upon your wedding night.

Amala. His brother Athulf! What can he do here?
I fear the man.

Athulf. Dost love him?
Amala. That were cause
Indeed to fear him. Leave me, leave me, sir:
It is too late. We cannot be together
For any good.
Athulf. This once we can. O Amala,
Had I been in my young days taught the truth,
And brought up with the kindness and affection
Of a good man! I was not myself evil,
But out of youth and ignorance did much wrong.
Had I received lessons in thought and nature,
We might have been together, but not thus.
How then? Did you not love me long ago?
More, O much more than him? Yes, Amala,
You would have been mine now. A life with thee,
Heavenly delight and virtue ever with us!
I've lost it, trod on it, and crush'd it. Woe!
O bitter woe is me!
Amala. Athulf, why make me
Rue the inevitable? Prithee leave me.
Athulf. Thee bye and bye: and all that is not thee.
Thee, my all, that I've forfeited I'll leave,
And the world's all, my nothing.
Amala. Nay; despond not.
Thou'lt be a merry, happy man some day,
And list to this as to a tale of some one
You had forgotten.
Athulf. Now no need of comfort:

I'm somehow glad that it did thus fall out.
Then had I lived too softly; in these woes
I can stand up, and show myself a man.
I do not think that I shall live an hour.
Wilt pardon me for that my earlier deeds
Have caused to thee of sorrow? Amala,
Pity me, pardon me, bless me in this hour;
In this my death, in this your bridal, hour.
Pity me, sweet.

Amala. Both thee and me: no more!

Athulf. Forgive!

Amala. With all my soul. God bless thee, my dear Athulf.

Athulf. Kiss I thy hand? O much more fervently
Now, in my grief, than heretofore in love.
Farewell, go; look not back again upon me.
In silence go. [*Exit Amala.*
She having left my eyes,
There's nothing in the world, to look on which
I'd live a moment longer. Therefore come,
Thou sacrament of death: Eternity,
I pledge thee thus. [*He drinks from a vial.*
How cold and sweet! It seems
As if the earth already began, shaking,
To sink beneath me. O ye dead, come near;
Why see I you not yet? Come, crowd about me;
Under the arch of this triumphal hour,
Welcome me; I am one of you, and one

That, out of love for you, have forced the doors
Of the stale world.

Enter ADALMAR.

Adalm. I'm wearied to the core: where's Amala?
Ha! Near her chambers! Who?
Athulf. Ask that to-morrow
Of the marble, Adalmar. Come hither to me.
We must be friends: I'm dying.
Adalm. How?
Athulf. The cup,
I've drank myself immortal.
Adalm. You are poisoned?
Athulf. I am blessed, Adalmar. I've done't myself.
'Tis nearly passed, for I begin to hear
Strange but sweet sounds, and the loud rocky dashing
Of waves, where time into Eternity
Falls over ruined worlds. The wind is fair,
The boat is in the bay,
And the fair mermaid pilot calls away.
Adalm. Self poisoned?
Athulf. Ay: a philosophic deed.
Go and be happy.
Adalm. God! What hast thou done?
Athulf. Justice upon myself.
Adalm. No. Thou hast stolen
The right of the deserving good old man
To rest, his cheerful labour being done.

Thou hast been wicked; caused much misery;
Dishonoured maidens; broken fathers' hearts;
Maddened some; made others wicked as thyself;
And darest thou die, leaving a world behind thee
That groans of thee to heaven?

Athulf. If I thought so—
Terrible would it be: then I've both killed
And damned myself. There's justice!

Adalm. Thou should'st have lived;
Devoting every minute to the work
Of useful, penitent amendment: then,
After long years, you might have knelt to Fate,
And ta'en her blow not fearing. Wretch, thou diest not,
But goest living into hell.

Athulf. It is too true:
I am deserted by those turbulent joys.
The fiend had made me death-drunk. Here I'll lie,
And die most wretchedly, accursed, unpitied
Of all, most hated by myself. O God,
If thou could'st but repeal this fatal hour,
And let me live, how day and night I'd toil
For all things to atone! Must I wish vainly?
My brother, is there any way to live?

Adalm. For thee, alas! in this world there is none.
Think not upon't.

Athulf. Thou liest: there must be:
Thou know'st it, and dost keep it secret from me,
Letting me die for hate and jealousy.

O that I had not been so pious a fool,
But killed thee, 'stead of me, and had thy wife!
I should be at the banquet, drinking to her,
Kissing her lip, in her eye smiling. . .
Peace!
Thou see'st I'm growing mad: now leave me here,
Accursed as I am, alone to die.

Adalm. Wretched, yet not despised, farewell my brother.

Athulf. O Arab, Arab! Thou dost sell true drugs.
Brother, my soul is very weary now:
Speak comfortably to me.

Adalm. From the Arab,
From Ziba, had'st the poison?

Athulf. Ay. 'Twas good:
An honest villain is he.

Adalm. Hold, sweet brother,
A little longer hold in hope on life;
But a few minutes more. I seek the sorcerer,
And he shall cure thee with some wondrous drug.
He can, and shall perform it: rest thee quiet:
Hope or revenge I'll bring thee. [*Exit.*

Athulf. Dare I hope?
O no: methinks it is not so unlovely,
This calm unconscious state, this breathless peace,
Which all, but troublesome and riotous man,
Assume without resistance. Here I'll lay me,
And let life fall from off me tranquilly.

[*Enter singers and musicians led by* SIEGFRIED; *they play under the windows of Amala's apartment, and sing.*]

Song.

By female voices.

We have bathed, where none have seen us,
In the lake and in the fountain,
Underneath the charmed statue
Of the timid, bending Venus,
When the water-nymphs were counting
In the waves the stars of night,
And those maidens started at you,
Your limbs shone through so soft and bright.
But no secrets dare we tell,
For thy slaves unlace thee,
And he, who shall embrace thee,
Waits to try thy beauty's spell.

By male voices.

We have crowned thee queen of women,
Since love's love, the rose, hath kept her
Court within thy lips and blushes,
And thine eye, in beauty swimming,
Kissing, we rendered up the sceptre,
At whose touch the startled soul
Like an ocean bounds and gushes,

And spirits bend at thy controul.
But no secrets dare we tell,
For thy slaves unlace thee,
And he, who shall embrace thee,
Is at hand, and so farewell.

Athulf. Shame on you! Do you sing their bridal song
Ere I have closed mine eyes? Who's there among you
That dare to be enamoured of a maid
So far above you, ye poor rhyming knaves?
Ha! there begins another.

Song by Siegfried.

Lady, was it fair of thee
To seem so passing fair to me?
Not every star to every eye
Is fair; and why
Art thou another's share?
Did thine eyes shed brighter glances,
Thine unkissed bosom heave more fair,
To his than to my fancies?
But I'll forgive thee still;
Thou'rt fair without thy will.
So be: but never know,
That 'tis the hue of woe.

Lady, was it fair of thee

To be so gentle still to me?
Not every lip to every eye
Should let smiles fly.
Why didst thou never frown,
To frighten from my pillow
Love's head, round which Hope wove a crown,
And saw not 'twas of willow?
But I'll forgive thee still;
Thou knew'st not smiles could kill.
Smile on: but never know,
I die, nor of what woe.

Athulf. Ha! Ha! That fellow moves my spleen;
A disappointed and contented lover.
Methinks he's above fifty by his voice:
If not, he should be whipped about the town,
For vending such tame doctrine in love-verses.
Up to the window, carry off the bride,
And away on horseback, squeaker!

Siegfr. Peace, thou bold drunken fellow that liest there!—
Leave him to sleep his folly out, good fellows.

[*Exit with musicians.*

Athulf. Well said: I do deserve it. I lie here
A thousand-fold fool, dying ridiculously
Because I could not have the girl I fancied.
Well, they are wedded; how long now will last
Affection or content? Besides 'twere possible

He might have quaffed a like draught. But 'tis done:
Villanous idiot that I am to think on't.
She willed it so. Then Amala, be fearless:
Wait but a little longer in thy chamber,
And he will be with thee whom thou hast chosen:
Or, if it make thee pastime, listen sweet one,
And I will sing to thee, here in the moonlight,
Thy bridal song and my own dirge in one.

He sings.

A cypress-bough, and a rose-wreath sweet,
A wedding-robe, and a winding-sheet,
A bridal-bed and a bier.
Thine be the kisses, maid,
And smiling Love's alarms;
And thou, pale youth, be laid
In the grave's cold arms.
Each in his own charms,
Death and Hymen both are here;
So up with scythe and torch,
And to the old church porch,
While all the bells ring clear:
And rosy, rosy the bed shall bloom,
And earthy, earthy heap up the tomb.

Now tremble dimples on your cheek,
Sweet be your lips to taste and speak,
For he who kisses is near:

By her the bridegod fair,
In youthful power and force;
By him the grizard bare,
Pale knight on a pale horse,
To woo him to a corpse.
Death and Hymen both are here;
So up with scythe and torch,
And to the old church porch,
While all the bells ring clear:
And rosy, rosy the bed shall bloom,
And earthy, earthy heap up the tomb.

Athulf. Now we'll lie down and wait for our two summoners;
Each patiently, at least.

Enter AMALA.

O thou kind girl,
Art thou again there? Come and lay thine hand
In mine; and speak again thy soft way to me.

Amala. Thy voice is fainter, Athulf: why sang'st thou?

Athulf. It was my farewell: now I'll sing no more;
Nor speak a great deal after this. 'Tis well,
You weep not. If you had esteemed me much,
It were a horrible mistake of mine.
Wilt close my eyes when I am dead, sweet maid?

Amala. O Athulf, thou might'st still have lived.

Athulf. What boots it,
And thou not mine, nor even loving me?
But that makes dying very sad to me.
Yet even thy pity is worth much.
Amala. O no;
I pity not alone, but I am wretched,—
Love thee and ever did most fervently,
Still hoping thou would'st turn and merit it.
But now—O God! if life were possible to thee,
I'd be thy friend for ever.
Athulf. O thou art full of blessings!
Thou lovest me, Amala: one kiss, but one;
It is not much to grant a dying man.
Amala. I am thy brother's bride, forget not that;
And never but to this, thy dying ear,
Had I confessed so much in such an hour.
But this be too forgiven. Now farewell.
'Twere not amiss if I should die to-night:
Athulf, my love, my only love, farewell.
Athulf. Yet one more minute. If we meet hereafter,
Wilt thou be mine? I have the right to thee;
And, if thou promise, I will let him live
This life, unenvied, with thee.
Amala. I will, Athulf:
Our bliss there will be greater for the sorrow
We now in parting feel.
Athulf. I go, to wait thee. [*Exit Amala.*
Farewell, my bliss! She loves me with her soul,

And I might have enjoyed her, were he fallen.
Ha! ha! and I am dying like a rat,
And he shall drink his wine, twenty years hence,
Beside his cherished wife, and speak of me
With a compassionate smile! Come, Madness, come,
For death is loitering still.

Enter ADALMAR *and* ZIBA.

Adalm. . . An antidote!
Restore him whom thy poisons have laid low,
If thou wilt not sup with thy fellow fiends
In hell to-night.

Ziba. I pray thee strike me not.
It was his choice; and why should he be breathing
Against his will?

Athulf. Ziba, I need not perish.
Now my intents are changed: so, if thou canst,
Dispense me life again.

Adalm. Listen to him, slave,
And once be a preserver.

Ziba. Let him rise.
Why, think you that I'd deal a benefit,
So precious to the noble as is death,
To such a pampered darling of delight
As he that shivers there? O, not for him,
Blooms my dark Nightshade, nor doth Hemlock brew
Murder for cups within her cavernous root.
Not for him is the metal blessed to kill,

Nor lets the poppy her leaves fall for him.
To heroes such are sacred. He may live,
As long as 'tis the Gout and Dropsy's pleasure.
He wished to play at suicide, and swallowed
A draught, that may depress and shake his powers
Until he sleeps awhile; then all is o'er.
And so good night, my princes. [*Exit.*

Adalm. Dost thou hear?

Athulf. Victory! victory! I *do* hear; and Fate hears,
And plays with Life for one of our two souls,
With dice made of death's bones. But shall I do't?
O Heaven! it is a fearful thing to be so saved!

Adalm. Now, brother, thou'lt be happy.

Athulf. With thy wife!
I tell thee, hapless brother, on my soul,
Now that I live, I *will* live; I alone;
And Amala alone shall be my love.
There's no more room for you, since you have chosen
The woman and the power which I covet.
Out of thy bridal bed, out of thy throne!
Away to Abel's grave. [*Stabs Adalmar.*

Adalm. Thou murderous fiend!
I was thy brother. [*dies.*

Athulf. (*after a pause*) How long a time it is since I was here!
And yet I know not whether I have slept,
Or wandered through a dreary cavernous forest,

Struggling with monsters. 'Tis a quiet place,
And one inviting strangely to deep rest.
I have forgotten something; my whole life
Seems to have vanished from me to this hour.
There was a foe whom I should guard against;
Who is he?

Amala. (*from her window*) Adalmar!

Athulf. (*in a low voice*) Hush! hush! I come to thee.

Let me but see if he be dead: speak gently,
His jealous ghost still hears.

Amala. So, it is over
With that poor troubled heart! O then to-night
Leave me alone to weep.

Athulf. As thou wilt, lady.
I'm stunned with what has happened. He is dead.

Amala. O night of sorrow! Bear him from the threshold.
None of my servants must know where and why
He sought his grave. Remove him. O poor Athulf,
Why did'st thou it? I'll to my bed and mourn.

[*retires.*

Athulf. Hear'st thou, corpse, how I play thy part? Thus had he
Pitied me in fraternal charity,
And I lain there so helpless. Precious cup,
A few drops more of thy somniferous balm,
To keep out spectres from my dreams to-night:
My eyelids thirst for slumber. But what's this,

That chills my blood and darkens so my eyes?
What's going on in my heart and in my brain,
My bones, my life, all over me, all through me?
It cannot last. No longer shall I be
What I am now. O I am changing, changing,
Dreadfully changing! Even here and now
A transformation will o'ertake me. Hark!
It is God's sentence muttered over me.
I am unsouled, dishumanized, uncreated;
My passions swell and grow like brutes conceived;
My feet are fixing roots, and every limb
Is billowy and gigantic, till I seem
A wild, old, wicked mountain in the air:
And the abhorred conscience of this murder,
It will grow up a lion, all alone,
A mighty-maned, grave-mouthed prodigy,
And lair him in my caves: and other thoughts,
Some will be snakes, and bears, and savage wolves:
And when I lie tremendous in the desart,
Or abandoned sea, murderers and idiot men
Will come to live upon my rugged sides,
Die, and be buried in me. Now it comes;
I break, and magnify, and lose my form.
And yet I shall be taken for a man,
And never be discovered till I die.
Terrible, terrible: damned before my time,
In secret! 'Tis a dread, o'erpowering phantom.

(He lies down by the body, and sleeps; the scene closes.)

SCENE IV.

A large hall in the ducal castle. Through the windows in the back ground appears the illuminated city.

Enter ISBRAND *and* SIEGFRIED.

Isbr. By my grave, Siegfried, 'tis a wedding-night.
The wish, that I have courted from my boyhood,
Comes blooming, crowned, to my embrace. Methinks,
The spirit of the city is right lovely;
And she will leave her rocky body sleeping,
To-night, to be my queenly paramour.
Has it gone twelve?

Siegfr. This half hour. Here I've set
A little clock, that you may mark the time.

Isbr. Its hand divides the hour. Are our guards here,
About the castle?

Siegfr. You've a thousand swordsmen,
Strong and true soldiers, at the stroke of one.

Isbr. One's a good hour; a ghostly hour. To-night
The ghost of a dead planet shall walk through,
And shake the pillars of this dukedom down.
The princes both are occupied and lodged
Far from us: that is well; they will hear little.

Go once more round, to the towers and battlements:
The bell, that strikes, says to our hearts 'Be one;'
And, with one motion of a hundred arms,
Be the beacons fixed, the alarums rung,
And tyrants slain! Be busy.

Siegfr. I am with them.

[*Exit.*

Isbr. Mine is the hour it strikes; my first of life.
To-morrow, with what pity and contempt,
Shall I look back new-born upon myself!

Enter a servant.

What now?

Servant. The banquet's ready.

Isbr. Let it wait awhile:
The wedding is not ended. That shall be
No common banquet: none sit there, but souls
That have outlived a lower state of being.
Summon the guests. [*Exit servant.*
Some shall have bitter cups,
The honest shall be banished from the board,
And the knaves duped by a luxurious bait.

Enter the DUKE, THORWALD, *and other guests.*

Friends, welcome hither in the prince's name,
Who has appointed me his deputy
To-night. Why this is right: while men are here,
They should keep close and warm and thick together,

Many abreast. Our middle life is broad;
But birth and death, the turnstiles that admit us
On earth and off it, send us, one by one,
A solitary walk. Lord governor,
Will you not sit?

Thorw. You are a thrifty liver,
Keeping the measure of your time beside you.

Isbr. Sir, I'm a melancholy, lonely man,
A kind of hermit: and to meditate
Is all my being. One has said, that time
Is a great river running to eternity.
Methinks 'tis all one water, and the fragments,
That crumble off our ever-dwindling life,
Dropping into't, first make the twelve-houred circle,
And that spreads outwards to the great round Ever.

Thorw. You're fanciful.

Isbr. A very ballad-maker.
We quiet men must think and dream at least.
Who likes a rhyme among us? My lord governor,
'Tis tedious waiting until supper time:
Shall I read some of my new poetry?
One piece at least?

Thorw. Well; without further preface,
If it be brief.

Isbr. A fragment, quite unfinished,
Of a new ballad called 'The Median Supper.'
It is about Astyages; and I
Differ in somewhat from Herodotus.

But altering the facts of history,
When they are troublesome, good governors
Will hardly visit rigorously. Attention!

(*reads*) " Harpagus, hast thou salt enough,
" Hast thou broth enough to thy kid?
" And hath the cook put right good stuff
" Under the pasty lid?"

" I've salt enough, Astyages,
" And broth enough in sooth;
" And the cook hath mixed the meat and grease
" Most tickling to my tooth."

So spake no wild red Indian swine,
Eating a forest rattle-snake:
But Harpagus, that Mede of mine,
And king Astyages so spake.

" Wilt have some fruit? Wilt have some wine?
" Here's what is soft to chew;
" I plucked it from a tree divine,
" More precious never grew."

Harpagus took the basket up,
Harpagus brushed the leaves away;
But first he filled a brimming cup,
For his heart was light and gay.

And then he looked, and saw a face,
Chopped from the shoulders of some one;
And who alone could smile in grace
So sweet? Why, Harpagus, thy son.

"Alas!" quoth the king, "I've no fork,
"Alas! I've no spoon of relief,
"Alas! I've no neck of a stork
"To push down this throttling grief.

"We've played at kid for child, lost both;
"I'd give you the limbs if I could;
"Some lie in your platter of broth:
"Good night, and digestion be good."

Now Harpagus said not a word,
Did no eye-water spill:
His heart replied, for that had heard;
And hearts' replies are still.

How do you like it?

Duke. Poetry, they say,
Should be the poet's soul; and here, methinks,
In every word speaks yours.

Isbr. Good. Do'nt be glad too soon.
Do ye think I've done? Three minutes' patience more.

A cannibal of his own boy,
He is a cannibal uncommon;

And Harpagus, he is my joy,
Because he wept not like a woman.

From the old supper-giver's pole
He tore the many-kingdomed mitre;
To him, who cost him his son's soul,
He gave it; to the Persian fighter:
And quoth,
" Old art thou, but a fool in blood:
" If thou hast made me eat my son,
" Cyrus hath ta'en his grandsire's food;
" There's kid for child, and who has won?

" All kingdomless is thy old head,
" In which began the tyrannous fun;
" Thou'rt slave to him, who should be dead:
" There's kid for child, and who has won?"

Now let the clock strike, let the clock strike now,
And world be altered!
(The clock strikes one, and the hour is repeated from the steeples of the city.)
Trusty time-piece,
Thou hast struck a mighty hour, and thy work's done;
For never shalt thou count a meaner one.
[*He dashes it on the ground.*
Thus let us break our old life of dull hours,
And hence begin a being, counted not

By minutes, but by glories and delights.

(*He steps to a window and throws it open.*

Thou steepled city, that dost lie below,
Time doth demand whether thou wilt be free.
Now give thine answer.

(*A trumpet is heard, followed by a peal of cannon. Beacons are fixed, &c. The stage is lined with soldiery.*)

Thorw. Traitor, desperate traitor!
Yet betrayed traitor! Make a path for me,
Or, by the majesty that thou offendest,
Thou shalt be struck with lightning in thy triumph.

Isbr. All kingdomless is the old mule,
In whom began the tyrannous fun;
Thou'rt slave to him, who was thy fool;
There's Duke for Brother; who has won?

Take the old man away.

Thorw. I go: but my revenge
Hangs, in its unseen might, godlike around you.

[*Exit guarded.*

Isbr. To work, my friends, to work! Each man his way.
These present instants, cling to them; hold fast;
And spring from this one to the next, still upwards.
They're rungs of Jacob's heaven-scaling ladder:
Haste, or 'tis drawn away. [*Exeunt cæteri.*

O stingy nature,
To make me but one man! Had I but body
For every several measure of thought and will,
This night should see me world-crowned.

Enter a messenger.

What news bring'st thou?

Messr. Friends of the governor hold the strongest tower,
And shoot with death's own arrows.

Isbr. Get thee back,
And never let me hear thy voice again,
Unless to say, "'tis taken." Hark ye, sirrah;
Wood in its walls, lead on its roof, the tower
Cries, "Burn me!" Go and cut away the draw-bridge,
And leave the quiet fire to himself:
He knows his business. [*Exit messenger.*

Enter ZIBA *armed.*

What with you?

Ziba. I'll answer,
When one of us is undermost.

Isbr. Ha! Midnight,
Can a slave fight?

Ziba. None better. Come; we'll struggle,
And roar, and dash, and tumble in our rage,
As doth the long-jawed, piteous crocodile
With the blood-howling hippopotamus,

In quaking Nile.

Isbr. Not quite so great; but rather,
Like to a Hercules of crockery
Slaying a Nemean lion of barley-sugar,
On a twelfth cake. [*They fight: Ziba is disarmed.*
Now darest thou cry for mercy?

Ziba. Never. Eternity! Come give me that,
And I will thank thee.

Isbr. Something like a man,
And something like a fool. Thou'rt such a reptile,
That I do like thee: pick up thy black life:
I would not make my brother King and Fool,
Friend Death, so poor a present. Hence!
[*Exit Ziba.*
They're busy.
'Tis a hot hour, which Murder steals from Love,
To beget ghosts in.

Enter SIEGFRIED.

Now?

Siegfr. Triumph! They cannot stand another half hour.
The loyal had all supped and gone to bed:
When our alarums thundered, they could only
Gaze from their frighted windows: and some few
We had in towers and churches to besiege.
But, when one hornet's nest was burnt, the rest
Cried quarter, and went home to end their naps.

Isbr. 'Twas good. I knew it was well planned.
Return,
And finish all. I'll follow thee, and see
How Mars looks in his night-cap. [*Exit Siegfried.*
O! it is nothing now to be a man.
Adam, thy soul was happy that it wore
The first, new, mortal members. To have felt
The joy of the first year, when the one spirit
Kept house-warming within its fresh-built clay,
I'd be content to be as old a ghost.
Thine was the hour to live in. Now we're common,
And man is tired of being merely human;
And I'll be something more: yet, not by tearing
This chrysalis of psyche ere its hour,
Will I break through Elysium. There are sometimes,
Even here, the means of being more than men:
And I by wine, and women, and the sceptre,
Will be, my own way, heavenly in my clay.
O you small star-mob, had I been one of you,
I would have seized the sky some moonless night,
And made myself the sun; whose morrow rising
Shall see me new-created by myself.
Come, come; to rest, my soul. I must sleep off
This old plebeian creature that I am. [*Exit.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.

An apartment in the ducal castle.

ISBRAND *and* SIEGFRIED.

Siegfr. THEY still wait for you in their council chamber,
And clamorously demand the keys of the treasure,
The stores of arms, lists of the troops you've hired,
Reports of your past acts, and your intentions
Towards the new republic.

Isbr. They demand!
A phrase politer would have pleased me better.
The puppets, whose heart strings I hold and play
Between my thumb and fingers, this way, that way;
Through whose masks, wrinkled o'er by age and passion,
My voice and spirit hath spoken continually;
Dare now to ape free will? Well done, Prometheus!
Thou'st pitied Punch and given him a soul,
And all his wooden peers. The tools I've used
To chisel an old heap of stony laws,
The abandoned sepulchre of a dead dukedom,
Into the form my spirit loved and longed for;

Now that I've perfected her beauteous shape,
And animated it with half my ghost;
Now that I lead her to our bridal bed,
Dare the mean instruments to lay their plea,
Or their demand forsooth, between us? Go;
And tell the fools, (you'll find them pale, and dropping
Cold tears of fear out of their trembling cheek-pores;)
Tell them, for comfort, that I only laughed;
And bid them all to sup with me to-night,
When we will call the cup to counsel.

Siegfr. Mean you
Openly to assume a kingly power,
Nor rather inch yourself into the throne?
Perhaps—but as you will.

Isbr. Siegfried, I'm one
That what I will must do, and what I do
Do in the nick of time without delay.
To-morrow is the greatest fool I know,
Excepting those who put their trust in him.
In one word hear, what soon they all shall hear:
A king's a man, and I will be no man
Unless I am a king. Why, where's the difference?
Throne-steps divide us: they're soon climbed perhaps:
I have a bit of FIAT in my soul,
And can myself create my little world.
Had I been born a four-legged child, methinks
I might have found the steps from dog to man,
And crept into his nature. Are there not

Those that fall down out of humanity,
Into the story where the four-legged dwell?
But to the conclave with my message quickly:
I've got a deal to do. [*Exit Siegfried.*

How I despise
All such mere men of muscle! It was ever
My study to find out a way to godhead,
And on reflection soon I found that first
I was but half created; that a power
Was wanting in my soul to be its soul,
And this was mine to make. Therefore I fashioned
A will above my will, that plays upon it,
As the first soul doth use in men and cattle.
There's lifeless matter; add the power of shaping,
And you've the crystal: add again the organs,
Wherewith to subdue sustenance to the form
And manner of one's self, and you've the plant:
Add power of motion, senses, and so forth,
And you've all kinds of beasts; suppose a pig:
To pig add reason, foresight, and such stuff,
Then you have man. What shall we add to man,
To bring him higher? I begin to think
That's a discovery I soon shall make.
Thus, owing nought to books, but being read
In the odd nature of much fish and fowl,
And cabbages and beasts, I've raised myself,
By this comparative philosophy,
Above your shoulders, my sage gentlemen.

Have patience but a little, and keep still,
I'll find means, bye and bye, of flying higher.

[*Exit.*

SCENE II.

Another apartment.

The DUKE, SIEGFRIED, MARIO, ZIBA *and conspirators.*

A conspirator (to Siegfried) Said he nought else?
Siegfr. What else he said was worse.
He is no more Isbrand of yesterday;
But looks and talks like one, who in the night
Hath made a bloody compact with some fiend.
His being is grown greater than it was,
And must make room, by cutting off men's lives,
For its shadowy increase.
Conspir. O friends, what have we done?
Sold, for a promise, still security,
The mild familiar laws our fathers left us;
Uprooted our firm country.
Ziba. And now sit,
Weeping like babes, among its ruins. Up!
You have been cheated; now turn round upon him.
In this his triumph pull away his throne,
And let him into hell.
Another conspir. But that I heard it

From you, his inmost counsel and next heart,
I'd not believe it. Why, the man was open;
We looked on him, and saw our looks reflected;
Our hopes and wishes found an echo in him;
He pleased us all, I think. Let's doubt the worst,
Until we see.

Duke. Until you feel and perish.
You looked on him, and saw your looks reflected,
Because his soul was in a dark deep well,
And must draw down all others to increase it:
Your hopes and wishes found an echo in him,
As out of a sepulchral cave, prepared
For you and them to sleep in. To be brief,
He is the foe of all; let all be his,
And he must be o'erwhelmed.

Siegfr. I throw him off,
Although I feared to say so in his presence,
And think you all will fear. O that we had
Our good old noble Duke, to help us here!

Duke. Of him I have intelligence. The governor,
Whose guards are bribed and awed by these good tidings,
Waits us within. There we will speak at large:
And O! may justice, for this once, descend
Like lightning-footed vengeance.

Mario. It will come;
But when, I know not. Liberty, whose shade
Attends, smiles still in patience, and that smile
Melts tyrants down in time: and, till she bids,

To strike were unavailing.

[*Exeunt all but Siegfried and Ziba.*

Ziba. Let them talk:
I mean to do; and will let no one's thoughts,
Or reasonable cooling counsels, mix
In my resolve to weaken it, as little
As shall a drop of rain or pity-water
Adulterate this thick blood-curdling liquor.
Siegfried, I'll free you from this thankless master.

Siegfr. I understand. To-night? Why that is best.
Man's greatest secret, like the earth's, the devil,
Slips through a key-hole or the smallest chink.
In plottings there is still some crack unstopped,
Some heart not air-tight, some fellow who doth talk
In sleep or in his cups, or tells his tale,
Love-drunk, unto his secret-selling mistress.
How shall't be done though?

Ziba. I'm his cup-bearer;
An office that he gave me in derision,
And I will execute so cunningly
That he shall have no lips, to laugh with, long;
Nor spare and spurn me, as he did last night.
Let him beware, who shows a dogged slave
Pity or mercy! For the drug, 'tis good:
There is a little, hairy, green-eyed snake,
Of voice like to the woody nightingale,
And ever singing pitifully sweet,
That nestles in the barry bones of death,

And is his dearest pet and play-fellow.
The honied froth about that serpent's tongue
Deserves not so his habitation's name,
As doth the cup that I shall serve to him.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

A meadow.

SIBYLLA *and ladies, gathering flowers.*

Sibyl. Enough; the dew falls, and the glow-worm's shining:
Now let us search our baskets for the fairest
Among our flowery booty, and then sort them.

Lady. The snow-drops are all gone; but here are cowslips,
And primroses, upon whose petals maidens,
Who love to find a moral in all things,
May read a lesson of pale bashfulness;
And violets, that have taught their young buds whiteness,
That blue-eyed ladies' lovers might not tear them
For the old comparison; daisies without number,
And butter-cups and lilies of the vale.

Sibyl. Sit then; and we will bind some up with rushes,
And wind us garlands. Thus it is with man;
He looks on nature as his supplement,

And still will find out likenesses and tokens
Of consanguinity, in the world's graces,
To his own being. So he loves the rose,
For the cheek's sake, whose touch is the most grateful
At night-fall to his lip; and, as the stars rise,
Welcomes the memories of delighting glances,
Which go up as an answer o'er his soul.

Lady. And therefore earth and all its ornaments,
Which are the symbols of humanity
In forms refined, and efforts uncompleted,
Graceful and innocent, temper the heart,
Of him who muses and compares them skilfully,
To glad belief and tearful gratitude.
This is the sacred source of poesy.

Sibyl. While we are young, and free from care, we think so.
But, when old age or sorrow brings us nearer
To spirits and their interests, we see
Few features of mankind in outward nature;
But rather signs inviting us to heaven.
I love flowers too; not for a young girl's reason,
But because these brief visitors to us
Rise yearly from the neighbourhood of the dead,
To show us how far fairer and more lovely
Their world is; and return thither again,
Like parting friends that beckon us to follow,
And lead the way silent and smilingly.
Fair is the season when they come to us,

Unfolding the delights of that existence
Which is below us: 'tis the time of spirits,
Who with the flowers, and like them, leave their graves:
But when the earth is sealed, and none dare come
Upwards to cheer us, and man's left alone,
We have cold, cutting winter. For no bridal,
Excepting with the grave, are flowers fit emblems.

Lady. And why then do we pluck and wreathe them now?

Sibyl. Because a bridal with the grave is near.
You will have need of them to strew a corpse.
Ay, maidens, I am dying; but lament not:
It is to me a wished for change of being.
Yonder behold the evening star arising,
Appearing bright over the mountain-tops;
He has just died out of another region,
Perhaps a cloudy one; and so die I;
And the high heaven, serene and light with joy,
Which I pass into, will be my love's soul,
That will encompass me; and I shall tremble,
A brilliant star of never-dying delight,
Mid the ethereal depth of his eternity.
Now lead me homewards: and I'll lay me down,
To sleep not, but to rest: then strew me o'er
With these flowers fresh out of the ghosts' abodes,
And they will lead me softly down to them.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.

The ruined cathedral, the sepulchre, and the cloisters; on which latter is painted the DANCE OF DEATH. *In the foreground a large covered table, with empty chairs set round it. Moonlight. The clock strikes twelve; on which is heard a*

Song in the air.

The moon doth mock and make me crazy,
And midnight tolls her horrid claim
On ghostly homage. Fie, for shame!
Deaths, to stand painted there so lazy.
There's nothing but the stars about us,
And they're no tell-tales, but shine quiet:
Come out, and hold a midnight riot,
Where no mortal fool dare flout us:
And, as we rattle in the moonlight pale;
Wanderers shall think 'tis the nightingale.

(*The Deaths, and the figures paired with them, come out of the walls: some seat themselves at the table, and appear to feast, with mocking gestures; others dance fantastically to a rattling music, singing*)

Mummies and skeletons, out of your stones;
Every age, every fashion, and figure of Death:

The death of the giant with petrified bones;
The death of the infant who never drew breath.
Little and gristly, or bony and big,
White and clattering, grassy and yellow;
The partners are waiting, so strike up a jig,
Dance and be merry, for Death's a droll fellow.
The emperor and empress, the king and the queen,
The knight and the abbot, friar fat, friar thin,
The gipsy and beggar, are met on the green;
Where's Death and his sweetheart? We want to begin.
In circles, and mazes, and many a figure,
Through clouds, over chimnies and corn-fields yellow,
We'll dance and daugh at the red-nosed grave-digger,
Who dreams not that Death is so merry a fellow.

(One with a scythe, who has stood sentinel, now sings)

Although my old ear
Hath neither hammer nor drum,
Methinks I can hear
Living skeletons come.
The cloister re-echoes the call,
And it frightens the lizard,
And, like an old hen, the wall
Cries "cluck! cluck! back to my gizzard;
"'Tis warm, though it's stony,
"My chickens so bony."

So come let us hide, each with his bride,
For the wicked are coming who have not yet died.
(The figures return to their places in the wall.)

Enter ISBRAND, *the* DUKE, SIEGFRIED, MARIO, WOLFRAM *as fool, and conspirators, followed by* ZIBA *and other attendants.*

Isbr. You wonder at my banqueting-house perhaps:
But 'tis my fashion, when the sky is clear,
To drink my wine out in the open air:
And this our sometime meeting-place is shadowy,
And the wind howleth through the ruins bravely.
Now sit, my gentle guests: and you, dark man,
[*to Wolfr.*
Make us as merry as you can, and proudly
Bear the new office, which your friend, the pilgrim,
Has begged for you: 'twas my profession once;
Do justice to that cap.

(They sit round the table, and partake of the feast, making gestures somewhat similar to those mocked by the figures.)

Duke. Now, having washed our hearts of love and sorrow,
And pledged the rosiness of many a cheek,
And, with the name of many a lustrous maiden,
Ennobled enough cups; feed, once again,
Our hearing with another merry song.

Isbr. 'Tis pity that the music of this dukedom,
Under the former government, went wrong,
Like all the rest: my ministers shall look to't.
But sing again, my men.

Siegfr. What shall it be,
And of what turn? Shall battle's drum be heard?
The chase's trumpet? Shall the noise of Bacchus
Swell in our cheeks, or lazy, sorrowing love
Burthen with sighs our ballad?

Isbr. Try the piece,
You sang me yesternight to sleep with best.
It is for such most profitable ends
We crowned folks encourage all the arts.

Song.

My goblet's golden lips are dry,
And, as the rose doth pine
For dew, so doth for wine
My goblet's cup;
Rain, O! rain, or it will die;
Rain, fill it up!

Arise, and get thee wings to-night,
Ætna! and let run o'er
Thy wines, a hill no more,
But darkly frown,
A cloud, where eagles dare not soar,
Dropping rain down.

Isbr. A very good and thirsty melody:
What say you to it, my court poet?

Wolfr. Good melody! If this be a good melody,
I have at home, fattening in my stye,
A sow that grunts above the nightingale.
Why this will serve for those, who feed their veins
With crust, and cheese of dandelion's milk,
And the pure Rhine. When I am sick o' mornings,
With a horn-spoon tinkling my porridge-pot,
'Tis a brave ballad: but in Bacchanal night,
O'er wine, red, black, or purple-bubbling wine,
That takes a man by the brain and whirls him round,
By Bacchus' lip! I like a full-voiced fellow,
A craggy-throated, fat-cheeked trumpeter,
A barker, a moon-howler, who could sing
Thus, as I heard the snaky mermaids sing
In Phlegethon, that hydrophobic river,
One May-morning in Hell.

Song.

Old Adam, the carrion crow,
The old crow of Cairo;
He sat in the shower, and let it flow
Under his tail and over his crest;
And through every feather
Leaked the wet weather;
And the bough swung under his nest;
For his beak it was heavy with marrow.

Is that the wind dying? O no;
It's only two devils, that blow
Through a murderer's bones, to and fro,
In the ghosts' moonshine.

Ho! Eve, my grey carrion wife,
When we have supped on kings' marrow,
Where shall we drink and make merry our life?
Our nest it is queen Cleopatra's skull,
'Tis cloven and cracked,
And battered and hacked,
But with tears of blue eyes it is full:
Let us drink then, my raven of Cairo.
Is that the wind dying? O no;
It's only two devils, that blow
Through a murderer's bones, to and fro,
In the ghosts' moonshine.

Isbr. Pilgrim, it is with pleasure I acknowledge,
In this your friend, a man of genuine taste:
He imitates my style in prose and verse:
And be assured that this deserving man
Shall soon be knighted, when I have invented
The name of my new order; and perhaps
I'll make him minister. I pledge you, Fool:
Black! something exquisite.
Ziba. Here's wine of Egypt,
Found in a Memphian cellar, and perchance

Pressed from its fruit to wash Sesostris' throat,
Or sweeten the hot palate of Cambyses.
See how it pours, thick, clear, and odorous.
Isbr. 'Tis full, without a bubble on the top:
Pour him the like. Now give a toast.
Wolfr. Excuse me:
I might offend perhaps, being blunt, a stranger,
And rustically speaking rustic thoughts.
Isbr. That shall not be: give us what toast you will,
We'll empty all our goblets at the word,
Without demur.
Siegfr. Well, since the stranger's silent,
I'll give a toast, which, I can warrant you,
Was yet ne'er drunk. There is a bony man,
Through whom the sun shines, when the sun is out;
Or the rain drops, when any clouds are weeping;
Or the wind blows, if Œolus will; his name,
And let us drink to his success and sanity;—
But will you truly?
Isbr. Truly, as I said.
Siegfr. Then round with the health of Death, round with the health
Of Death the bony, Death the great; round, round.
Empty yourselves, all cups, unto the health
Of great King Death!
Wolfr. Set down the cup, Isbrand, set the cup down.
Drink not, I say.
Siegfr. And what's the matter now?

Isbr. What do you mean, by bidding me not drink?
Answer, I'm thirsty.
Wolfr. Push aside the boughs:
Let's see the night, and let the night see us.
Isbr. Will the fool read us astronomic lectures?
Wolfr. Above stars; stars below; round the moon stars.
Isbrand, don't sip the grape-juice.
Isbr. Must I drink,
Or not, according to a horoscope?
Says Jupiter, no? Then he's a hypocrite.
Wolfr. Look upwards, how 'tis thick and full, how sprinkled,
This heaven, with the planets. Now, consider;
Which will you have? The sun's already taken,
But you may find an oar in the half moon,
Or drive the comet's dragons; or, if you'd be
Rather a little snug and quiet god,
A one-horse star is standing ready for you.
Choose, and then drink.
Isbr. If you are sane or sober,
What do you mean?
Wolfr. It is a riddle, sir,
Siegfried, your friend, can solve.
Siegfr. Some sorry jest.
Wolfr. You'll laugh but palely at its sting, I think.
Hold the dog down; disarm him; grasp his right.
My lord, this worthy courtier loved your virtues

To such excess of piety, that he wished
To send you by a bye-path into heaven.
Drink, and you're straight a god—or something else.
A conspirator. O murderous villain! Kill him
where he sits.
Isbr. Be quiet, and secure him. Siegfried, Siegfried;
Why hast thou no more genius in thy villany?
Wilt thou catch kings in cobwebs? Lead him hence:
Chain him to-night in prison, and to-morrow
Put a cord round his neck and hang him up,
In the society of the old dog
That killed my neighbour's sheep.
Siegfr. I do thank'thee.
In faith, I hoped to have seen grass grow o'er you,
And should have much rejoiced. But, as it is,
I'll willingly die upright in the sun:
And I can better spare my life than you.
Good night then, Fool and Duke: you have my curse;
And Hell will have you some day down for hers:
So let us part like friends. My lords, good sleep
This night, the next I hope you'll be as well
As I shall. Should there be a lack of rope,
I recommend my bowstring as a strong one.
Once more, farewell: I wish you all, believe me,
Happily old, mad, sick, and dead, and cursed.
[*Exit guarded.*
Isbr. That gentleman should have applied his talent
To writing new-year's wishes. Another cup!

Wolfr. He has made us dull: so I'll begin a story.
As I was newly dead, and sat beside
My corpse, looking on it, as one who muses
Gazing upon a house he was burnt out of,
There came some merry children's ghosts, to play
At hide-and-seek in my old body's corners:—

Isbr. But how came you to die and yet be here?

Wolfr. Did I say so? Excuse me. I am absent,
And forget always that I'm just now living.
But dead and living, which are which? A question
Not easy to be solved. Are you alone,
Men, as you're called, monopolists of life?
Or is all being, living? and *what is,*
With less of toil and trouble, more alive,
Than they, who cannot, half a day, exist
Without repairing their flesh mechanism?
Or do you owe your life, not to this body,
But to the sparks of spirit that fly off,
Each instant disengaged and hurrying
From little particles of flesh that die?
If so, perhaps you are the dead yourselves:
And these ridiculous figures on the wall
Laugh, in their safe existence, at the prejudice,
That you are anything like living beings.
But hark! The bell tolls, and a funeral comes.

(A funeral procession crosses the stage; the pall borne by ladies.)

Dirge.

We do lie beneath the grass
In the moonlight, in the shade
Of the yew-tree. They that pass
Hear us not. We are afraid
They would envy our delight,
In our graves by glow-worm night.
Come follow us, and smile as we;
We sail to the rock in the ancient waves,
Where the snow falls by thousands into the sea,
And the drowned and the shipwrecked have
happy graves.

(*The procession passes out.*

Duke. What's this that comes and goes, so shadow-like?

Attendant. They bear the fair Sibylla to her grave.

Duke. She dead!
Darest thou do this, thou grave-begotten man,
Thou son of Death? (*To Wolfram.*

Wolfr. Sibylla dead already?
I wondered how so fair a thing could live:
And, now she is no more, it seems to me
She was too beautiful ever to die!

Isbr. She, who was to have been my wife? Here, fellow;
Take thou this flower to strew upon her grave,
A lily of the valley; it bears bells,

For even the plants, it seems, must have their fool,
So universal is the spirit of folly;
And whisper, to the nettles of her grave,
" King Death hath asses' ears."

Mario. (stabbing Isbrand) At length thou art
condemned to punishment
Down, thou usurper, to the earth and grovel!
The pale form, that has led me up to thee,
Bids me deal this; and, now my task is o'er,
Beckons me hence. [*Exit.*

Isbr. Villain, thou dig'st deep:
But think you I will die? Can I, that stand
So strong and powerful here, even if I would,
Fall into dust and wind? No: should I groan,
And close my eyes, be fearful of me still.
'Tis a good jest: I but pretend to die,
That you may speak about me bold and loudly;
Then I come back and punish: or I go
To dethrone Pluto. It is wine I spilt,
Not blood, that trickles down.

Enter THORWALD *with soldiers.*

Thorw. Long live duke Melveric, our rightful
sovereign!
Down with the traitorous usurper, Isbrand!

All. Long live duke Melveric!

Isbr. Duke Isbrand, long live he!
Duke Melveric is deposed.

Thorw. Receive the homage
Of your revolted city.
Duke. Thorwald, thanks.
The usurper has his death-wound.
Thorw. Then cry, Victory!
And Long life to duke Melveric! once more.
Isbr. I will live longer: when he's dead and buried,
A hundred years hence, or, it may be, more,
I shall return and take my dukedom back.
Imagine not I'm weak enough to perish:
The grave, and all its arts, I do defy.
Wolfr. Meantime Death sends you back this cap of office.
At his court you're elected to the post:
Go, and enjoy it.
(He sets the fool's cap on Isbrand's head.
Isbr. Bye and bye. But let not
Duke Melveric think that I part unrevenged:
For I hear in the clouds about me voices,
Singing

All kingdomless is thy old head,
In which began the tyrannous fun;
He fetches thee, who should be dead;
There's Duke for Brother! Who has won?

I jest and sing, and yet alas! am he,
Who in a wicked masque would play the Devil;

But jealous Lucifer himself appeared,
And bore him—whither? I shall know to-morrow,
For now Death makes indeed a fool of me. [*dies.*

Duke. Where are my sons? I have not seen them lately.

Go to the bridegroom's lodgings, and to Athulf's,
And summon both. [*Exit attendant.*

Wolfr. They will be here; and sooner
Than you would wish. Meanwhile, my noble Duke,
Some friends of mine behind us seem to stir.
They wish, in honour of your restoration,
In memory also of your glorious deeds,
To present masque and dance to you. Is't granted?

Duke. Surely; and they are welcome, for we need
Some merriment amid these sad events.

Wolfr. You in the wall there then, my thin light archers,
Come forth and dance a little: 'tis the season
When you may celebrate Death's Harvest-home.

(*A dance of Deaths. In the middle of it enter* AMALA, *followed by a bier, on which the corpse of Adalmar is borne. The dance goes out.*)

Duke. What's this? Another mummery?

Wolfr. The antimasque,
I think they call it; 'tis satirical.

Amala. My lord, you see the bridal bed that waits me.
Your son, my bridegroom, both no more, lies here,

Cold, pale, abandoned in his youthful blood:
And I his bride have now no duty else,
But to kneel down, wretched, beside his corpse,
Crying for justice on his murderers.

Duke. Could my son die, and I not know it sooner?
Why, he is cold and stiff. O! now my crown
Is sunk down to the dust, my life is desolate.
Who did this deed?

Enter Athulf.

Wolfr. Athulf, answer thou!

Amala. O no! Suspect not him. He was last night
Gentle, and full of love, to both of us,
And could imagine ne'er so foul a deed.
Suspect not him; for so thou mak'st me feel
How terrible it is that he is dead,
Since his next friend's accused of such a murder:
And torture not his ghost, which must be here,
Striving in vain to utter one soul-sound,
To speak the guiltless free. Tempt not cruelly
The helplessness of him who is no more,
Nor make him discontented with the state,
Which lets him not assert his brother's innocence.

Duke. (*to Athulf.*) Answer! Thou look'st like
one, unto whose soul
A secret voice, all day and night, doth whisper,
"Thou art a murderer." Is it so? Then rather
Speak not. Thou wear'st a dagger at thy side;

Avenge the murdered man, thou art his brother;
And never let me hear from mortal lips
That my son was so guilty.

Athulf. Amala,
Still love me; weep some gentle drops for me;
And, when we meet again, fulfil thy promise.
Father, look here!

(*He kisses Amala's hand and stabs himself.*

Amala. O Athulf! live one moment to deny it;
I ask that, and that only. Lo! old man,
He hath in indignation done the deed.
Since thou could'st think him for an instant guilty,
He held the life, which such a base suspicion
Had touched, and the old father who could think it,
Unworthy of him more: and he did well.
I bade thee give me vengeance for my bridegroom,
And thou hast slain the only one who loved me.
Suspect and kill me too: but there's no need;
For such a one, as I, God never let
Live more than a few hours.

(*She falls into the arms of her ladies.*

Duke. Thorwald, the crown is yours; I reign no more.
But when, thou spectre, is thy vengeance o'er?

Wolfr. Melveric, all is finished, which to witness
The spirit of retribution called me hither.
Thy sons have perished for like cause, as that
For which thou did'st assassinate thy friend.
Sibylla is before us gone to rest.

Blessing and Peace to all who are departed!
But thee, who daredst to call up into life,
And the unholy world's forbidden sunlight,
Out of his grave him who reposed softly,
One of the ghosts doth summon, in like manner,
Thee, still alive, into the world o' th' dead.

(*Exit with the Duke into the sepulchre.*

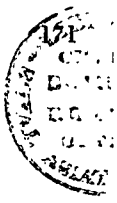
The curtain falls.

L'ENVOI.

WHO findeth comfort in the stars and flowers
Apparelling the earth and evening sky,
That moralize throughout their silent hours,
And woo us heaven-wards till we wish to die;
Oft hath he singled from the soothing quire,
For its calm influence, one of softest charm
To still his bosom's pangs, when they desire
A solace for the world's remorseless harm.
Yet they, since to be beautiful and bless
Is but their way of life, will still remain
Cupbearers to the bee in humbleness,
Or look untouched down through the moony rain,
Living and being worlds in bright content,
Ignorant, not in scorn, of his affection's bent.

So thou, whom I have gazed on, seldom seen,
Perchance forgotten to the very name,
Hast in my thoughts the living glory been,
In beauty various, but in grace the same.
At eventide, if planets were above,
Crowning anew the sea of day bereft,
Swayed by the dewy heaviness of love,
My heart felt pleasure in the track thou'dst left:

L'Envoi.



And so all sights, all musings, pure and fair,
Touching me, raised thy memory to sight,
As the sea-suns awakes the sun in air,—
If they were not reflections, thou the light.
Therefore bend hitherwards, and let thy mildness
Be glassed in fragments through this storm and wildness.

And pardon, if the sick light of despair
Usurp thy semblance oft, with tearful gleam
Displaying haunted shades of tangled care
In my sad scenes: soon shall a pearly beam,
Shed from the forehead of my heaven's queen,—
That front thy hand is pressed on,—bring delight.
Nor frown, nor blame me, if, such charms between,
Spring mockery, or thoughts of dreadest night.
Death's darts are sometimes Love's. So Nature tells,
When laughing waters close o'er drowning men;
When in flowers' honied corners poison dwells;
When Beauty dies: and the unwearied ken,
Of those who seek a cure for long despair,
Will learn. Death hath his dimples everywhere;
Love only on the cheek, which is to me most fair.

NOTES.

THE historical fact, on which the preceding drama may be considered as founded, viz. that a Duke of Munsterberg in Silesia was stabbed to death by his court-fool, is to be found in Flögel's Gesch. d. Hoffnarren Liegnitz v. Leipzig 1789. 8. S. 297 u. folg.

Page 91, *line* 21.

' Aldabaron, called by the Hebrews Luz.'

As this antiquity in osteological history seems to have been banished from anatomical works since the good old days of Bartholinus and Kulmus, it will perhaps be agreeable to the curious reader to find here some notice of it, collected out of the rabbinical writings, &c. by the author's Russian friend Bernhard Reich, whose knowledge of the science and language renders him singularly capable of such investigations.

The bone Luz (לוז) is, according to the Rabbins, the only one which withstands dissolution after death, and out of which the body will be developed at the resurrection. A curious passage on the subject occurs in Berestieth raba. Sect. 28, האדם כעת־ד לנא נמחדז אפילד לוז שד שדרה שממע הקבה כעיק את

" Even the Luz of the shedrah, שדרה (*backbone*) out of " which God will hereafter raise the son of earth, is annihi- " lated." Old anatomists as Bartholinus, Vesalius, &c. mention it, but are not certain what bone was so designated, whether it is situated in the hand, foot, or vertebral column,

Luz לוז is however beyond a doubt the os coccygis of the osteologians, for the rabbins say that it lies under the 18th Chulia חוליא *vertebra.* (Maaroch Hamarachot Article לוז), and it appears from various passages in the Talmud that the vertebræ of the neck were not reckoned by the rabbinical writers to the vertebral column שדרה, but that they began to count the latter from the first dorsal vertebra, like Hippocrates (de ossium naturâ. V.) They say בשדרה יח חולירת 18 vertebræ (*chuliot*) compose the shedrah שדרה vertebral column—See Ohol. c. 1. Berach p. 30. Now, if we reckon the twelve dorsal, five lumbal, vertebræ, and the os sacrum together, we have the eighteen bones under which Luz is to be found: Luz is therefore the os coccygis. Etymology is also for this opinion; for Luz לוז is an almond; the Targum Jonathan translates in many places the Hebrew Shaked שקד almond, plural Sckedim שקדים Luz and Luzin לוזין לוז (Num. 17. 23, &c.) The form of the bone is really similar to that of an almond. In the lexicon we find the explanation of the word given from κόκκυξ, cuckoo, but this bird appears to have very little to do with the bone, and it is probable that the term is derived by some corruption from κόκκος, a nut or the seed of any tree.

FINIS.

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THE BRIDES' TRAGEDY

First Published, 1822.

(Original Dedication.)

TO

THE REV. H. CARD, M.A. F.R.S. F.A.S.

ETC. ETC. ETC.

My DEAR SIR,

AS you have, in a late publication,* which displays your usual learning and judgment, mentioned this performance in terms, perhaps dictated by friendship rather than critical impartiality, I must beg to inscribe it to your name.

There are many prejudices with which a playwright has to contend, on his first appearance, more especially if he court the reader in lieu of the spectator; and it is so great an effort to give up any established topic of condolement, that we can hardly yet expect those, who call themselves "the critics," to abandon their favourite complaint of the degeneracy which characterizes the efforts of contemporary tragic writers. But let any unprejudiced person turn to the productions even of the present year; let him candidly examine the anonymous Play, "The Court of Tuscany," and compare its best scenes with the master-pieces of

* See Dissertation on the Herefordshire Beacon, Note.

Rowe or Otway; let him peruse Allan Cunningham's poetical drama, which has won the applause of the highest literary authority of the day; let him dwell upon the energetic grandeur and warlike animation which Croly has so successfully displayed in pourtraying the restless spirit of Catiline; and I think his verdict will place this age not the last among those which have done honour to the British stage.

These instances are sufficient to attest the flourishing condition of dramatic literature, but, alas! we must seek them in the closet, not in their proper home, the populous theatre, for there we shall meet with a sight, sufficient to deter the boldest adventurer from hazarding the representation of his best and most vaunted piece, our countrymen barely enduring the poetry of Shakspeare as the vehicle of a fashionable song or a gaudy pageant. Even the theatre itself however may appear "not yet enslaved, not wholly vile," as long as the classic taste of Milman, the plaintive sweetness of Barry Cornwall, and the frank nature of Knowles, linger, like flowers upon the Muse's grave. But they have almost deserted the public haunt, and England can hardly boast anything that deserves to be called a national stage.

The following scenes were written, as you well know, exclusively for the closet, founded upon facts, which occurred at Oxford, and are well detailed and illustrated by an interesting ballad in a little volume

of Poems, lately published at Oxford, entitled the Midland Minstrel, by Mr. Gillet: and may thus be succinctly narrated.

The Manciple of one of the Colleges early in the last century had a very beautiful daughter, who was privately married to a student without the knowledge of the parents on either side.

During the long vacation subsequent to this union the husband was introduced to a young lady, who was at the same time proposed as his bride: absence, the fear of his father's displeasure, the presence of a lovely object, and, most likely, a natural fickleness of disposition overcame any regard he might have cherished for his ill-fated wife, and finally he became deeply enamoured of her unconscious rival. In the contest of duties and desires, which was the consequence of this passion, the worse part of man prevailed, and he formed and executed a design almost unparalleled in the annals of crime.

His second nuptials were at hand when he returned to Oxford, and to her who was now an obstacle to his happiness. Late at night he prevailed upon his victim to accompany him to a lone spot in the *Divinity Walk*, and there murdered and buried her. The wretch escaped detection, and the horrid deed remained unknown till he confessed it on his death-bed. The remains of the unfortunate girl were dug up in the place described, and the Divinity Walk was de-

serted and demolished, as haunted ground. Such are the outlines of a *Minor's Tragedy*.

My age, it will be said, is a bad excuse for the publication of a faulty poem; be it so: secure of your approbation, I can meet with a careless smile the frown of him who reads only to condemn.

I am, my dear Sir,

Your's most sincerely,

THOMAS LOVELL BEDDOES.

PERSONS REPRESENTED.

The Duke.
Lord Ernest.
Hesperus, his Son.
Orlando.
Claudio.
Mordred.
Hubert.
A Huntsman.
Boy, Page to Orlando.
Jailor.

Olivia, Sister to Orlando.
Violetta, her Companion.
Lenora, Wife of Mordred.
Floribel, her Daughter.

Lords, Citizens, Attendants, Guards, &c.

THE BRIDES' TRAGEDY.

ACT I.

SCENE I. *A garden.*

(HESPERUS *alone.*)

NOW Eve has strewn the sun's wide billowy couch
With rosered feathers moulted from her wing,
Still scanty-sprinkled clouds, like lagging sheep,
Some golden-fleeced, some streaked with delicate pink,
Are creeping up the welkin, and behind
The wind, their boisterous shepherd, whistling drives them,
From the drear wilderness of night to drink
Antipodean noon. At such a time,
While to wild melody fantastic dreams
Dance their gay morrice in the midmost air,
And sleepers' truant fancies fly to join them;

While that winged song, the restless nightingale
Turns her sad heart to music, sweet it is
Unseen on the moss-cushioned sward to lean,
And into some coy ear pour out the soul
In sighs and whispers.

(*Enter* FLORIBEL.)

So late, Floribel?
Nay, since I see that arch smile on thy cheek
Rippling so prettily, I will not chide,
Although the breeze and I have sighed for you
A dreary while, and the veiled Moon's mild eye
Has long been seeking for her loveliest nymph.
Come, come, my love, or shall I call you bride?

Flor. E'en what you will, so that you hold me dear.

Hesp. Well, both my love and bride; see, here's a bower
Of eglantine with honeysuckles woven,
Where not a spark of prying light creeps in,
So closely do the sweets enfold each other.
'Tis Twilight's home; come in, my gentle love,
And talk to me. So! I've a rival here;
What's this that sleeps so sweetly on your neck?

Flor. Jealous so soon, my Hesperus? Look then,
It is a bunch of flowers I pulled for you:
Here's the blue violet, like Pandora's eye,
When first it darkened with immortal life.

Hesp. Sweet as thy lips. Fie on those taper fingers,

Have they been brushing the long grass aside
To drag the daisy from it's hiding-place,
Where it shuns light, the Danäe of flowers,
With gold up-hoarded on its virgin lap?

Flor. And here's a treasure that I found by chance,
A lily of the valley; low it lay
Over a mossy mound, withered and weeping,
As on a fairy's grave.

Hesp. Of all the posy
Give me the rose, though there's a tale of blood
Soiling its name. In elfin annals old
'Tis writ, how Zephyr, envious of his love,
(The love he bare to Summer, who since then
Has weeping visited the world;) once found
The baby Perfume cradled in a violet;
('Twas said the beauteous bantling was the child
Of a gay bee, that in his wantonness
Toyed with a peabud in a lady's garland;)
The felon winds, confederate with him,
Bound the sweet slumberer with golden chains,
Pulled from the wreathed laburnum, and together
Deep cast him in the bosom of a rose,
And fed the fettered wretch with dew and air.
At length his soul, that was a lover's sigh,
Waned from his body, and the guilty blossom
His heart's blood stained. The twilight-haunting gnat
His requiem whined, and harebells tolled his knell;
And still the bee, in pied velvet dight,

With melancholy song, from flower to flower,
Goes seeking his lost offspring.

Flor. Take it then,
In its green sheath. What guess you, Hesperus,
I dreamed last night? Indeed it makes mé sad,
And yet I think you love me.

Hesp. By the planet
That sheds its tender blue on lovers' sleeps,
Thou art my sweetest, nay, mine only thought:
And when my heart forgets thee, may yon heaven
Forget to guard me.

Flor. Aye, I knew thou didst;
Yet surely mine's a sad and lonely fate
Thus to be wed to secresy; I doubt,
E'en while I know my doubts are causeless torments.
Yet I conjure thee, if indeed I hold
Some share in thy affections, cast away
The blank and ugly vizor of concealment,
And, if mine homely breeding do not shame thee,
Let thy bride share her noble father's blessing.

Hesp. In truth I will; nay, prithee let me kiss
That naughty tear away; I will, by heaven;
For, though austere and old, my sire must gaze
On thy fair innocence with glad forgiveness.
Look up, my love,
See how yon orb, dressed out in all her beams,
Puts out the common stars, and sails along
The stately Queen of heaven; so shall thy beauties,

But the rich casket of a noble soul,
Shine on the world and bless it. Tell me now
This frightful vision.
Flor. You will banter me;
But I'm a simple girl, and oftentimes
In solitude am very, very mournful:
And now I think how silly 'twas to weep
At such an harmless thing: well, you shall hear.
'Twas on a fragrant bank I laid me down,
Laced o'er and o'er with verdant tendrils, full
Of dark-red strawberries. Anon there came
On the wind's breast a thousand tiny noises,
Like flowers' voices, if they could but speak;
Then slowly did they blend in one sweet strain,
Melodiously divine; and buoyed the soul
Upon their undulations. Suddenly,
Methought, a cloud swam swanlike o'er the sky,
And gently kissed the earth, a fleecy nest,
With roses, rifled from the cheek of Morn,
Sportively strewn; upon the ethereal couch,
Her fair limbs blending with the enamoured mist,
Lovely above the portraiture of words,
In beauteous languor lay the Queen of Smiles:
In tangled garlands, like a golden haze,
Or fay-spun threads of light, her locks were floating,
And in their airy folds slumbered her eyes,
Dark as the nectar-grape that gems the vines
In the bright orchard of the Hesperides.

Within the ivory cradle of her breast
Gambolled the urchin god, with saucy hand
Dimpling her cheeks, or sipping eagerly
The rich ambrosia of her melting lips:
Beneath them swarmed a bustling mob of Loves,
Tending the sparrow stud, or with bees' wings
Imping their arrows. Here stood one alone,
Blowing a pyre of blazing lovers' hearts
With bellows full of absence-caused sighs:
Near him his work-mate mended broken vows
With dangerous gold, or strung soft rhymes together
Upon a lady's tress. Some swelled their cheeks,
Like curling rose-leaves, or the red wine's bubbles,
In petulant debate, gallantly tilting
Astride their darts. And one there was alone,
Who with wet downcast eyelids threw aside
The remnants of a broken heart, and looked
Into my face and bid me 'ware of love,
Of fickleness, and woe, and mad despair.

Hesp. 'Aye, so he said; and did my own dear girl
Deem me a false one for this foolish dream?
I wish I could be angry: hide, distrustful,
Those penitent blushes in my breast, while I
Sing you a silly song old nurses use
To hush their crying babes with. Tenderly
'Twill chide you.

Song.

Poor old pilgrim Misery,
Beneath the silent moon he sate,
A-listening to the screech°owl's cry,
And the cold wind's goblin prate;
Beside him lay his staff of yew
With withered willow twined,
His scant grey hair all wet with dew,
His cheeks with grief ybrined;
And his cry it was ever, alack!
Alack, and woe is me!

Anon a wanton imp astray
His piteous moaning hears,
And from his bosom steals away
His rosary of tears:
With his plunder fled that urchin elf,
And hid it in your eyes,
Then tell me back the stolen pelf,
Give up the lawless prize;
Or your cry shall be ever, alack!
Alack, and woe is me!

Hesp. Not yet asleep?
Flor. Asleep! No, I could ever,
Heedless of times and seasons, list to thee.
But now the chilly breeze is sallying out
Of dismal clouds; and silent midnight walks

Wrapt in her mourning robe. I fear it's time
To separate.

Hesp. So quickly late! oh cruel, spiteful hours,
Why will ye wing your steeds from happiness,
And put a leaden drag upon your wheels
When grief hangs round our hearts. Soon will we meet,
And to part never more.

Flor. Oh! that dear never,
It will pay all. Good night, and think of me.

Hesp. Good night, my love; may music-winged sleep
Bind round thy temples with her poppy wreath;
Soft slumbers to thee. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

A room in Orlando's palace.

CLAUDIO *and* ORLANDO *meeting.*

Orl. Thanks for thy speed, good Claudio; is all done
As I have ordered?

Clau. Could I be unwilling
In the performance of what you command,
I'd say with what regret I led Lord Ernest
Into the prison. My dear lord,
He was your father's friend—

Orl. And he is mine.
You must not think Orlando so forgetful

As to abuse the reverence of age,
An age, like his, of piety and virtue;
'Tis but a fraud of kindness, sportive force.
Clau. You joy me much, for now I dare to own
I almost thought it was a cruel deed.
Orl. Nay, you shall hear. The sums he owed my father,
Of which his whole estate is scarce a fourth,
Are never to be claimed, if Hesperus,
His son, be wedded to Olivia. Now
This Hesperus, you tell me, is a votary,
A too much favoured votary of my goddess,
The Dian of our forests, Floribel;
Therefore I use this show of cruelty,
To scare a rival and to gain a brother.
Clau. Now by the patches on the cheek of the moon,
(Is't not a pretty oath?) a good romance;
We'll have't in ballad metre, with a burthen
Of sighs, how one bright glance of a brown damsel
Lit up the tinder of Orlando's heart
In a hot blaze.
Orl. Enough to kindle up
An altar in my breast! 'Twas but a moment,
And yet I would not sell that grain of time
For thy eternity of heartlessness.
Clau. Well, well. I can bear nonsense from a lover;
Oh, I've been mad threescore and eighteen times
And three quarters; written twenty yards, two nails,

An inch and a quarter, cloth measure, of sonnets;
Wasted as much salt water as would pickle
Leviathan, and sighed enough to set up
Another wind;——

Orl. Claudio, I pray thee, leave me;
I relish not this mockery.

Clau. Good sir, attend
To my experience. You've no stock as yet
To set up lover: get yourself a pistol
Without a touch-hole, or at least remember,
If it be whole, to load it with wet powder;
I've known a popgun, well applied, or even
The flying of a cork, give reputation
To courage and despair. A gross of garters,
Warranted rotten, will be found convenient.

Orl. Now you are troublesome.

Clau. One precept more;
Purge and drink watergruel, lanthorn jaws
Are interesting; fat men can't write sonnets,
And indigestion turns true love to bile.

Orl. 'Tis best to part. If you desire to serve me,
Persuade the boy to sacrifice his passion;
I'll lead him to Olivia, they were wont
In childhood to be playmates, and some love
May lie beneath the ashes of that friendship,
That needs her breath alone to burst and blaze.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

A prison.

Enter Guards *leading* LORD ERNEST *in chains.*

L. Ern. I pray you do not pity me. I feel
A kind of joy to meet Calamity,
My old, old friend again. Go, tell your lord,
I give him thanks for these his iron bounties.
How now? I thought you led me to a prison,
A dismal antichamber of the tomb,
Where creatures dwell, whose ghosts but half inhabit
Their ruinous flesh-houses; here is air
As fresh as that the bird of morning sings in,
And shade that scarce is dusk, but just enough
To please the meek and twilight-loving eye
Of lone Religion. 'Tis an hermitage
Where I may sit and tell my o'erpassed years,
And fit myself for dying. My old heart
Holds not enough of gratitude to pay
This noble kindness, that in guise of cruelty
Compels me to my good.

Guard. I am most glad
That you endure thus cheerfully; remember
Your son's one word will give you liberty.

L. Ern. I know he would not do me so much wrong.
You think, because I'm white with age, I mourn

Such hardships. See, my hand's as firm and steady
As when I broke my first spear in the wars;
Alas! I am so glad, I cannot smile.

Guard. We sorrow thus to leave thee.

L. Ern. Sorrow! man,
It is a woman's game: I cannot play it.
Away; your whining but provokes my spleen.

(As the guards are retiring he bursts into a harsh laugh: when they have left the stage he stops short.)

They're gone and cannot hear me. Now, then, now,
Eyes weep away my life, heart, if thou hast
A pulse to strain, break, break, oh break!

(*Enter* HESPERUS.)

My son,
Come here, I'll tell thee all they've done to me,
How they have scoffed and spurned me, thrown me here
In wretched loneliness

Hesp. Alas! my father.

L. Ern. Oh set me free, I cannot bear this air.
If thou dost recollect those fearful hours,
When I kept watch beside my precious boy,
And saw the day but on his pale, dear face;
If thou didst think me, in my gentlest moods,
Patient and mild, and even somewhat kind;
Oh give me back the pity that I lent,

Pretend at least to love and comfort me.

Hesp. Speak not so harshly; I'm not rich enough
To pay one quarter of the dues of love,
Yet something I would do. Show me the way,
I will revenge thee well.

L. Ern. But, whilst thou'rt gone,
The dread diseases of the place will come
And kill me wretchedly. No, I'll be free.

Hesp. Aye, that thou shalt. I'll do; what will I not?
I'll get together all the world's true hearts,
And if they're few, there's spirit in my breast
Enough to animate a thousand dead.

L. Ern. My son
We need not this; a word of thine will serve.

Hesp. Were it my soul's last sigh I'd give it thee.

L. Ern. Marry.

Hesp. I—cannot.

L. Ern. But thou dost not know
Thy best-loved woos thee. Oft I've stood unseen,
In some of those sweet evenings you remember,
Watching your innocent and beauteous play,
(More innocent because you thought it secret,
More beautiful because so innocent;)
Oh! then I knew how blessed a thing I was
To have a son so worthy of Olivia.

Hesp. Olivia!

L. Ern. Blush not, though I name your mistress;
You soon shall wed her.

Hesp. I will wed the plague.
I would not grudge my life, for that's a thing,
A misery, thou gavest me: but to wed
Olivia; there's damnation in the thought.

L. Ern. Come, speak to him, my chains, for ye've a voice
To conquer every heart that's not your kin?
Oh! that ye were my son, for then at least
He would be with me. How I loved him once!
Aye, when I thought him good; but now—Nay, still
He must be good, and I, I have been harsh,
I feel, I have not prized him at his worth:
And yet I think, if Hesperus had erred,
I could have pardoned him, indeed I could.

Hesp. We'll live together.

L. Ern. No, for I shall die;
But that's no matter.

Hesp. Bring the priest, the bride.
Quick, quick. These fetters have infected him
With slavery's sickness. Yet there is a secret,
'Twixt heaven and me, forbids it. Tell me, father;
Were it not best for both to die at once?

L. Ern. Die! thou hast spoke a word, that makes my heart
Grow sick and wither; thou hast palsied me
To death. Live thou to wed some worthier maid;
Know that thy father chose this sad seclusion;
(Ye rebel lips, why do you call it sad?)

Should I die soon, think not that sorrow caused it,
But, if you recollect my name, bestow it
Upon your best-loved child, and when you give him
His Grandsire's blessing, add not that he perished
A wretched prisoner.

Hesp. Stop, or I am made
I know not what,—perhaps a villain. Curse me,
Oh if you love me, curse.

L. Ern. Aye, thou shalt hear
A father's curse; if fate hath put a moment
Of pain into thy life; a sigh, a word,
A dream of woe; be it transferred to mine;
And for thy days; oh! never may a thought
Of others' sorrow, even of old Ernest's,
Darken their calm, uninterrupted bliss;
And be thy end—oh! any thing but mine.

Hesp. Guilt, thou art sanctified in such a cause;
Guards; *(they enter)* I am ready. Let me say't so low,
So quickly that it may escape the ear
Of watchful angels; I will do it all.

L. Ern. There's nought to do; I've learned to love this solitude.
Farewell, my son. Nay, never heed the fetters;
We can make shift to embrace.

Hesp. Lead him to freedom,
And tell your lord I will not,—that's I will.

[*Exeunt Lord Ernest and guards.*

Here, fellow; put your hand upon my mouth
Till they are out of hearing. Leave me now.
No, stay; come near me, nearer yet. Now fix
The close attention of your eyes on mine.
Guard. My lord!
Hesp. See'st thou not death in them?
Guard. Forbid it, fate.
Hesp. Away! ill-omened hound;
I'll be a ghost and play about the graves,
For ghosts can never wed. [*Exit guard.*
There, there they go; my hopes, my youthful hopes,
Like ingrate flatterers. What have I to do
With life? Ye sickly stars, that look with pity
On this cursed head, be kind and tell the lightning
To scathe me to a cinder; or if that
Be too much blessing for a child of sin,
But strike me mad, I do not ask for more.
Come from your icy caves, ye howling winds,
Clad in your gloomy panoply of clouds,
And call into your cars, as ye pass o'er
The distant quarters of this tortured world,
Every disease of every clime,
Here shall they banquet on a willing victim;
Or with one general ague shake the earth,
The pillars of the sky dissolve and burst,
And let the ebon-tiled roof of night
Come tumbling in upon the doomed world:—
Deaf are they still? then death is all a fable,

A pious lie to make man lick his chains
And look for freedom's dawning through his grate.
Why are we tied unto this wheeling globe,
Still to be racked while traitorous Hope stands by,
And heals the wounds that they may gape again?
Aye to this end the earth is made a ball,
Else crawling to the brink despair would plunge
Into the infinite eternal air,
And leave its sorrows and its sins behind.
Since death will not, come sleep, thou kindred power,
Lock up my senses with thy leaden key,
And darken every crevice that admits
Light, life, and misery, if thou canst, for ever. [*Exit.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.

A chamber in Orlando's palace.

Enter ORLANDO *to his* Boy *asleep.*

Orl. Boy! he is asleep;
Oh innocence, how fairly dost thou head
This pure, first page of man. Peace to thy slumbers;
Sleep, for thy dreams are 'midst the seraphs' harps,
Thy thoughts beneath the wings of holiness,
Thine eyes in Paradise.
The day may come, (if haply gentle death
Say not amen to thy short prayer of being,
And lap thee in the bosom of the blest;)
I weep to think on, when the guilty world
Shall, like a friend, be waiting at thy couch,
And call thee up on ev'ry dawn of crime.
Boy (awaking.) Dear master, didst thou call? I will not be
A second time so slothful.
Orl. Sleep, my boy,
Thy task is light and joyous, to be good.
Boy. Oh! if I must be good, then give me money,

I pray thee, give me some, and you shall find
I'll buy up every tear, and make them scarcer
Than diamonds.

Orl. Beautiful pity, thou shalt have enough;
But you must give me your last song.

Boy. Nay, sir;
You're wont to say my rhymes are fit for girls,
And lovesick ideots; I have none you praise
Full of the heat of battle and the chase.

Orl. Sing what you will, I'll like it.

Song.

A ho! A ho!
Love's horn doth blow,
And he will out a-hawking go.
His shafts are light as beauty's sighs,
And bright as midnight's brightest eyes,
And round his starry way
The swan-winged horses of the skies,
With summer's music in their manes,
Curve their fair necks to zephyr's reins,
And urge their graceful play.

A ho! A ho!
Love's horn doth blow,
And he will out a-hawking go.
The sparrows flutter round his wrist,
The feathery thieves that Venus kissed

And taught their morning song,
The linnets seek the airy list,
And swallows too, small pets of Spring,
Beat back the gale with swifter wing,
And dart and wheel along.

A ho! A ho!
Love's horn doth blow,
And he will out a-hawking go.
Now woe to every gnat that skips
To filch the fruit of ladies' lips,
His felon blood is shed;
And woe to flies, whose airy ships
On beauty cast their anchoring bite,
And bandit wasp, that naughty wight,
Whose sting is slaughter-red.

Orl. Who is thy poet, boy?

Boy. I must not tell.

Orl. Then I will chide thee for him. Who first drew
Love as a blindfold imp, an earthen dwarf,
And armed him with blunt darts? His soul was kin
To the rough wind that dwells in the icy north,
The dead, cold pedant, who thus dared confine
The universe's soul, for that is Love.
'Tis he that acts the nightingale, the thrush,
And all the living musics, he it is
That gives the lute, the harp, and tabor speech,

That flutters on melodious wings and strikes
The mute and viewless lyres of sunny strings
Borne by the minstrel gales, mimicking vainly
The timid voice, that sent him to my breast,
That voice the wind hath treasured and doth use
When he bids roses open and be sweet.

Boy. Now I could guess.

Orl. What, little carious one?

Boy. The riddle of Orlando's feelings. Come,
You must not frown. I know the lawn, the cot,
Aye, and the leaf-veiled lattice.

Orl. I shall task
Your busy watchfulness. Bear you this paper,
I would not trust it to a doubtful hand.

Boy. Unto the wood-nymph? You may think the road
Already footed.

Orl. Go, and prosper then. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

The interior of Mordred's cottage.

LENORA *and* FLORIBEL.

Flor. My mother, you're too kind, you ought to check
These wayward humours. Oh, I know too well
I'm a poor, foolish, discontented child;
My heart doth sink when Hesperus is gone,

And leaves me nought but fears. Forgive me then,
If I have vexed you.

Len. Dear and gentle soul,
You ne'er offended me, but when you said
You had offended. When I look on thee,
If there's a thought that moistens in my eye,
Fear, that thy husband cannot match such goodness,
Is looking but there.

Flor. Fears of Hesperus!
That's not my mother's thought, cast it away:
He is the glass of all good qualities,
And what's a little virtue in all others
Looks into him and sees itself a giant;
He is a nosegay of the sweets of man,
A dictionary of superlatives;
He walks about, a music among discords,
A star in night, a prayer 'midst madmen's curses;
And if mankind, as I do think, were made
To bear the fruit of him, and him alone,
It was a glorious destiny.

Len. He is a goodly man, and yet they say
Strange passions sleep within him. There's Orlando,
A gentle suitor; Floribel, he loved you,
He had no father, I have often wished
What it's too late to tell you.

Flor. Mother, your Orlando
Is a good gentleman, I wish him well,
But to my husband—We'll not talk of him.

Yet you shall see I can be cool sometimes,
When Hesperus deserves it, as he does
Even now for his delay.

Len. He's here: I'll leave you,
You shall not quarrel with him for my pleasure.

[*Exit.*

Enter HESPERUS.

Hesp. Good morrow, Floribel.

Flor. Fair noon to Hesperus; I knew a youth,
In days of yore, would quarrel with the lark,
If with its joyous matins it forbeare
His early pipe beneath his mistress' window;
Those days are passed; alas! for gallantry.

Hesp. Floribel!

Flor. Sir, d'ye know the gentleman?
Give him my benison and bid him sleep
Another hour, there's one that does not miss him.

Hesp. Lady, I came to talk of other things,
To tell you all my secrets: must I wait
Until it fits your humour?

Flor. As you please:
(The worst of three bad suitors, and his name
Began with an H.)

Hesp. Good morrow then, again.

Flor. Heaven help you, sir,
And so adieu.

Hesp. Madam, you spoke; you said it, Floribel:

I never thought mine ears a curse before.
Did I not love thee? Say, have I not been
The kindest?

Flor. Yes indeed thou *hast* been. Now
A month is over. What would I not give
For those four sevens of days? But I have lived them,
And that's a bliss. You speak as if I'd lost
The little love you gave your poor one then.

Hesp. And you as if you cared not for the loss.
Oh Floribel, you'll make me curse the chance
That fashioned this sad clay and made it man;
It had been happier as the senseless tree
That canopies your sleep. But Hesperus,
He's but the burthen of a scornful song
Of coquetry; beware, that song may end
In a death-groan.

Flor. (*sings.*)

The knight he left the maid,
That knight of fickleness,
Her's was the blame he said,
And his the deep distress.

If you are weary of poor Floribel,
Pray be not troubled; she can do without thee.
Oh Hesperus, come hither, I must weep;
Say you will love me still, and I'll believe it,
When I forget my folly.

Hesp. Dear, I do;
By the bright fountains of those tears I do.
Flor. You don't despise me much? May I look up
And meet no frown?
Hesp. Try to look through my breast,
And see my truth. But, oh! my Floribel,
Take heed how thou dost look unkindly on me;
For grey-beards have been kneeling, and with prayers
Trying to pluck thee from my bosom; fairness,
And innocence, and duty league against thee.
Then do't not, sweet, again; for sometimes strange
And horrid thoughts bring whispers to my soul:
They shall not harm thee, girl. I meant indeed,
Hard hearted as I was, to have disclosed
A tale of terror; but I'll back again:
Why, let the old man die.
Flor. Oh no, no, no;
We will let no one die, but cherish them
With love like ours, and they will soon be well:
Stay and I'll tell you how to save him.
Hesp. Thou!
Excellent loveliness,
Thou save him! But I must be gone, or else
Those looks will lure a secret from my breast,
That threatens both. I'll home and think of something.
Meet me to-morrow in the sweet-briar thicket,
When twilight fades to evening. I'm in haste.
[*Exit.*

Flor. My better thoughts go with thee. It is true
He hath too much of human passion in him,
But I will hold him dear, and, if again
My wicked senses grow so cruel quick
As to suspect his kindness, I'll be sure
My eyes have got false sight, my ears false hearing,
And my whole mind's become a rebel traitress.

Enter ORLANDO'S Boy.

Boy. These for fair Floribel; you are the one
I hear my master talk of, surely, lady;
And yet his words are feeble shadowers
Of such pure beauty. Please you read his thoughts.

Flor. You hold a courtly language for such years;
But be you 'ware of compliment akin
To falsehood.

(reads.) From the sad-souled Orlando.
Fie sir; your gifts are dangerous. Look you here,
As I disperse the wicked syllables
Met in this little parliament of words,
And give them to the light and careless winds,
So do I bid him tear the thoughts of me
Out of his breast, and hold me as a thing
Further from him than misery.

Boy. It is ungently done,—nay, I must say so,—
To hurt the generous blossoms of his love;
I am sorry that a hand so beautiful
Can be so fell.

Flor. Boy, thou dost not know
The fears that urge me. Had my Hesperus
Seen these or thee, I know not what of ill
Must have befallen us.

Boy. Lady, you must not weep;
I have a ballad which my master hears
In his sad moods; it has the art to raise
A dimple on the cheek of moody care.
I'll sing it you.

Flor. Young one, I almost love thee.
[*Kisses him.*

Enter HESPERUS.

Hesp. Why Floribel,—Girl! Painted fickleness!
Madam, I'm rude; but Hesperus did not think
He could intrude on—what was Floribel.

Flor. Nor doth he ever.

Hesp. If he does not now,
Be sure he won't again. Oh girl, girl, girl,
Thou'st killed my heart: I thought thee once, good fool,
I will not tell thee what, thou'lt laugh at me.

Flor. By heaven!

Hesp. Don't name it: do not be forsworn.
But why should I regard thy words or oaths?

Flor. Hesperus, Hesperus!

Hesp. Nay, I should be sorry
To cheat the longing boy; he fills thine arms
Excellent well, believe it. Urchin, seek me

When that mis-featured butter-print of thine
Is bearded; I will trim thee with a sword.
Flor. Hesperus, thou art mad.
Hesp. Better be mad than treacherous. Aye, 'twas well
To tear the letters; there might be a husband;
No, he shall be no more.
Flor. But listen to me,
These lips that thou hast kissed,—
Hesp. I, and a thousand,
Men, boys, and monsters.
Flor. And these arms thou callest
Beloved and fair—
Hesp. And fickle and adulterous.
Enough of woman: boy, your paramour
Is troublesome, sirrah, milk-blooded imp,
Raise her; she loves your silken limbs; I give you
All that is mine of her.
Flor. Oh! save me, dearest.
Hesp. She speaks to you, sir. I beseech you both,
Go on; don't heed me: oh, I joy to see
Your love-tricks.
Flor. By the solemn spousal tie,
I charge you, hear me.
Hesp. Lady, I will tell you,
Though it is needless, what I meant to say,
And leave you then for ever. You remember
A loving dupe you entertained some while,

One Hesperus, you must; oh! that you ever
Forgot him. Well, I will be brief. He gave you,
And bade you keep it as you would his love,
A little bird, a sweet red-bosomed creature,
To toy with in his absence: (then he knew not
You had another playmate for your chamber.)
This bird, it was a creature that I loved,
Yet it did not deceive me; I have thought
There was a spirit in it—never mind;
I dreamed I spoke to one, who valued me
And my poor feelings. Unto you I gave it,
And you have lost it; in my way I passed
Its silent wicker house. Now I have spoken,
Perhaps was tedious: but I'm still so foolish,
That I will say, good bye.

Flor. Oh stay, my love.

Hesp. He will, the lovely cub.

Flor. Thee, thee I mean.

Hesp. I am no lover, I. Madam, we're strangers;
And yet I knew some while ago a form
Like thine, as fair, as delicate. Oh heaven!
To think of it. But she was innocent,
Innocent, innocent.

Flor. The angels know
I am as spotless.

Hesp. Go to them; I'm not one;
Perhaps this pap-faced chit may be. Nay, girl,
Wet not thy cheeks: I've seen a player weep.

I will not go, for if I do, the flock
Of her warm suitors will be toying here;
Yet I'll not stay; for she will melt and pray
Till I'm a fool again. Strain not your lungs
With laughter when I'm gone. Oh woman, woman.
[*Exit.*

Flor. Poor boy, thou hast undone me: lead me in.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

An apartment in Orlando's palace.

Enter HESPERUS.

Hesp. Oh thou sad self, thou wretched half of Hesperus,
Thou'rt lost indeed, there's nought of life about thee,
But the one thought, that thou hast saved a father.
Now I do think that if I meet a goodness
In woman's shape, a fair one I'd not ask,
But something that would soothe and comfort me,
I could almost love her.

Enter ORLANDO *and* OLIVIA.

Orl. My brother Hesperus, our poor home is honoured
By thy loved father's presence and thine own.

Here is a living welcome, prithee know her;
Olivia.

Hesp. Blessedness, you should have said.
A music waits upon her every step,
That my heart leaps to.

Oliv. Courtly, sir, and kind.

Hesp. And fond I would have made it. Oh fair lady,
A smile of thine will give me health again.

Orl. Sister, thou needst no witness to these blushes.
School her, sir, in the arts of compliment,
You'll find her an apt learner. [*Exit.*

Oliv. Had I a right to pray to you, I would.

Hesp. Pray, lady? Didst thou ever see the goddess
Step from her dignity of stone, or leave
The hallowed picture in its tinted stole,
And crouch unto her suppliant? Oh no;
If there is aught so poor a thing as I
Can please you with, command it and you bless me.

Oliv. Try, I beseech thee, try not to detest,
Not utterly to detest a silly girl,
Whose only merit is that she'd be thine.

Hesp. Hate thee, thou virtue?

Oliv. Well, if it must be,
Play the deceiver for a little while;
Don't tell me so.

Hesp. By Truth's white name I'll tell thee;
Olivia, there was once an idle thought
That aped affection in my heart; nay, nay,

Not in my heart; it was a dream or so;
A dream within a dream; a pale, dim warmth;
But thou hast dawned like summer on my soul,
Or like a new existence.

Oliv. 'Twere delightful,
If credible; but you are all too gallant.

Hesp. I knew it must be so: you'll not believe me,
But doubt and say 'tis sudden. Do not minute
The movements of the soul, for some there are,
Of pinion unimpeded, thrice word-swift,
Outsoar the sluggish flesh; and these, Olivia,
Anticipating their death-given powers, can grasp
A century of feeling and of thought;
Outlive the old world's age, and be at once
In the present, past, and future; while the body
Lives half a pulse's stroke. To see and love thee
Was but one soul's step.

Oliv. Then thou canst endure me;
Thou dost not hate the forward maid? My prayer
Through many a year has been for that one word;
And I have kept the precious thought of thee,
Hidden almost from myself. But I'll not speak,
For I have told too much, too childishly.

Hesp. Dear, I could weep, but that my brain is dry,
To think upon thee. *Me*—'Twere well to court
The yellow pestilence, or woo the lightning
Unto thy bosom; but to hold me dear—
It is a crime of hell; forget you thought it.

Oliv. 'Tis sweeter than a virtue, I must love thee.
Hesp. And love me truly?
Oliv. Heaven grant me life
To prove it.
Hesp. Then thou shalt be mine own; but not till death:
We'll let this life burn out, no matter how;
Though every sand be moistened with our tears,
And every day be rain-wet in our eyes;
Though thou shouldst wed some hateful avarice,
And I grow hoary with a daubed deceit,
A smiling treachery in woman's form,
Sad to the soul, heart-cankered and forlorn;
No matter, all no matter.
Though madness rule our thoughts, despair our hearts,
And misery live with us, and misery talk,
Our guest all day, our bed-fellow all night;
No matter, all no matter.
For when our souls are born then will we wed;
Our dust shall mix and grow into one stalk,
Our breaths shall make one perfume in one bud,
Our blushes meet each other in a rose,
Our sweeter voices swell some sky-bird's throat
With the same warbling, dwell in some soft pipe,
Or bubble up along some sainted spring's
Musical course, and in the mountain trees
Slumber our deeper tones, by tempests waked:
We will be music, spring, and all fair things,

The while our spirits make a sweeter union
Than melody and perfume in the air.
Wait then, if thou dost love me.
Oliv. Be it so;
You'll let me pray for death, if it will bring
Such joys as these? Though once I thought to live
A happy bride; but I must learn new feelings.
Hesp. New feelings! Aye to watch the lagging clock,
And bless each moment as it parts from thee,
To court the blighting grasp of tardy age,
And search thy forehead for a silver tress
As for a most prized jewel.
Oliv. I cannot think
Of that cold bed diseases make for us,
That earthy sleep; oh! 'tis a dreadful thing.
Hesp. The very air,
I thank it, (the same wild and busy air,
That numbers every syllable I speak,
In the same instant my lips shape its sound,
With the first lisps of him, who died before
The world began its story;) steals away
A little from my being;
And at each slightest tremour of a leaf
My hearse moves one step nearer. Joy, my love!
We're nearer to our bridal sheets of lead
Than when your brother left us here just now,
By twenty minutes talk.
Oliv. It is not good

Thus to spurn life, the precious gift of heaven,
And watch the coming light of dissolution
With such desperate hope. Can we not love
In secret, and be happy in our thoughts,
Till in devotion's train, th' appointed hour
Lead us, with solemnly rejoicing hearts,
Unto our blessed end?

Hesp. End! thou sayest.
And do those cherries ripen for the worms,
Those blue enchantments beam to light the tomb?
Was that articulate harmony, (Love uses
Because he seems both Love and Innocence
When he sings to it,) that summer of sweet breath,
Created but to perish and so make
The deads' home loveliest?

Oliv. But what's to live without my Hesperus?
A life of dying. 'Tis to die each moment
In every several sense. To look despair,
Feel, taste, breathe, eat, be conscious of despair.
No, I'll be nothing rather.

Hesp. Nothing but mine!
Thou flower of love, I'll wear thee in my bosom;
With thee the wrath of man will be no wrath,
Conscience and agony will smile like pleasure,
And sad remembrance lose its gloomy self
In rapturous expectation.

Oliv. Let me look on thee;
Pray pardon me, mine eyes are very fools.

Hesp. Jewels of pity, azure stars of beauty
Which lost affection steers by; could I think
To dim your light with sorrow? Pardon me,
And I will serve you ever. Sweet, go in;
Somewhat I have to think on. [*Exit Olivia.*
Floribel,
I would not have thee cross my path to night;
There is an indistinct dread purpose forming,
Something, whose depth of wickedness appears
Hideous, incalculable, but inevitable;
Now it draws nearer, and I do not shudder;
Avaunt! haunt me no more; I dread it not,
But almost—hence! I must not be alone. [*Exit.*

SCENE IV.

A tapestried chamber in the same.

HESPERUS *discovered in a disturbed slumber.*

Hesp. (starting from his couch.) Who speaks?
Who whispers there? A light! a light!
I'll search the room, something hath called me thrice,
With a low muttering voice of toadish hisses,
And thrice I slept again. But still it came
Nearer and nearer, plucked my mantle from me,
And made mine heart an ear, in which it poured
Its loathed enticing courtship. Ho! a light.

Enter Attendant *with a torch.*

Thou drowsy snail, thy footsteps are asleep,
Hold up the torch.

Attend. My lord, you are disturbed.
Have you seen aught?

Hesp. I lay upon my bed,
And something in the air, out-jetting night,
Converting feeling to intenser vision,
Featured its ghastly self upon my soul
Deeper than sight.

Attend. This is Delusion surely;
She's busy with men's thoughts at all night hours,
And to the waking subtle apprehension
The darkling chamber's still and sleepy air
Hath breath and motion oft.

Hesp. Lift up the hangings, mark the doors, the corners;
Seest nothing yet? No face of fiendlike mirth,
More frightful than the fixed and doggish grin
Of a dead madman?

Attend. Nought I see, my lord,
Save the long, varied crowd of warlike shapes
Set in the stitched picture.

Hesp. Heard ye then?
There was a sound, as though some marble tongue
Moved on its rusty hinge, syllabling harshly
The hoarse death-rattle into speech.

Attend. The wind is high, and through the silent rooms
Murmurs his burthen, to an heedless ear,
Almost articulate.

Hesp. Thou sleepest, fool;
A voice has been at my bedside to-night,
Its breath is burning on my forehead still,
Still o'er my brain its accents, wildly sweet,
Hover and fall. Away and dream again:
I'll watch myself.

[*He takes the torch and turns to the hangings. Exit Attendant.*

Aye, these are living colours,
Those cheeks have worn their youth these hundred years,
Those flowers are verdant in their worsted spring
And blooming still;
While she, whose needle limned so cunningly,
Sleeps and dreams not. It is a goodly state,
And there is one I wish had ta'en her bed
In the stone dormitory.
(Blindfold moth,
Thou shalt not burn thy life; there, I have saved thee;
If thou art grateful, mingle with the air
That feeds the lips of her I thought of once,
Choak her, moth, choak her. I could be content,
If she were safe in heaven.)
Your stout dagger
Is fairly fashioned for a blade of stitches,

And shines, methinks, most grimly; well, thou art
An useful tool sometimes, thy tooth works quickly,
And, if thou gnawest a secret from the heart,
Thou tellest it not again: ha! the feigned steel
Doth blush and steam. There is a snuff of blood.

[*Grasps his dagger convulsively.*

Who placed this iron aspic in my hand?
Speak! who is at my ear?

[*He turns, and addresses his shadow.*

I know thee now,
I know the hideous laughter of thy face.
'Tis Malice' eldest imp, the heir of hell,
Red-handed Murther. Slow it whispers me,
Coaxingly with its serpent voice. Well sung,
Syren of Acheron!
I'll not look on thee;
Why does thy frantic weapon dig the air
With such most frightful vehemence? Back, back,
Tell the dark grave I will not give it food.
Back to thy home of night. What! playest thou still?
Then thus I banish thee. Out, treacherous torch,
Sure thou wert kindled in infernal floods,
Or thy bright eye would blind at sights like this.

[*Dashes the torch on the ground.*

Tempt me no more; I tell thee, Floribel
Shall never bleed. I pray thee, guilty word,
Tempt me no more.

[*Wraps himself in his mantle.*

I'm deaf, my ears are safe,
I do not hear thee woo me to the deed;
Thou tellest to one without auricular sense
Olivia's beauties and that bad one's faults.
Oh! bring me thoughts of pity. Come, come, come,
Or I am lost.
Bad goblin, must I fly thee? [*Exit.*

SCENE V.

A hall in the same.

LORD ERNEST, ORLANDO, CLAUDIO, OLIVIA.

L. Ern. Saw ye my son?
Oliv. Some hours ago we parted,
And he was strange, though gentle, in his talk.
Orl. I passed him in the garden, just at twilight;
He stood with eyes wide open, but their sense
Dreamed, in dumb parley with some fancied thing;
For his lips moved, and he did walk and gaze,
Now frown most mournfully, now smile most madly,
And weep, and laugh, groan deep and gnash his teeth,
And now stand still with such a countenance,
As does the marble sorrow o'er a tomb.
At last he tore his feet, as they were roots,
Up from the earth, and sighed like one o'ercome;
Then, with his fingers thrust upon his eyes

And dashed unclosed away, he seemed to snatch
Some loathly object out of them, and leapt
Into the thicket's gloom.

L. Ern. Who saw him since?

Clau. In most distempered wildness he hath left
His chamber now.

L. Ern. Go seek him, every one,
I do beseech you; 'tis a fearful period,
I know too truly. On his nurse's breast,
Some twenty years ago, he lay and mused
Upon her singing and bright merry lips;
A viewless bolt dropped on her, and she died
Most hideously; close in the infant's face
Looked all the horrors of her bursting eyes;
And, as the months bring round that black remembrance,
His brain unsettles, bloody thoughts oppress
And call him from his bed. Search all the darkness,
Each one a several way; dear daughter, in.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE VI.

A suicide's grave.

ORLANDO *and* CLAUDIO.

Clau. There is a plague in this night's breath, Orlando,
The dews fall black and blistering from yon cloud
Anchored above us; dost thou mark how all
The smokes of heaven avoid it and crowd on
Far from its fatal darkness? Some men say
That the great king of evil sends his spirits
In such a winged car, to stir ill minds
Up to an act of death.

Orl. We may not think so,
For there's a fascination in bad deeds,
Oft pondered o'er, that draws us to endure them,
And then commit. Beware of thine own soul:
'Tis but one devil ever tempts a man,
And his name's *Self.* Know'st thou these rankling hemlocks?

Clau. I've seen the ugsome reptiles battening on them,
While healthy creatures sicken at the sight.

Orl. Five months ago they were an human heart,

Beating in Hugo's breast. A parricide
Here sleeps, self-slaughtered. 'Twas a thing of grace,
In his early infancy; I've known him oft
Outstep his pathway, that he might not crush
The least small reptile. But there is a time
When goodness sleeps; it came, and vice was grafted
On his young thoughts, and grew, and flourished there:
Envenomed passions clustered round that prop;
A double fruit they bore; a double fruit of death.

Clau. Enough, Orlando,
The imps of darkness listen, while we tell
A dead man's crimes. Even now I heard a stir,
As if the buried turned them in their shrouds
For mere unquiet. Home, it is the time
When the hoarse fowl, the carrier-bird of woe,
Brings fevers from the moon, and maddening dreams;
The hour's unholy, and who hath not sent
After the parted sun his orisons,
Falls 'neath the sway of evil. [*Exeunt.*

Enter HESPERUS.

Hesp. Hail, shrine of blood, in double shadows veiled,
Where the Tartarian blossoms shed their poison
And load the air with wicked impulses;
Hail, leafless shade, hallowed to sacrilege,
Altar of death! Where is thy deity?
With him I come to covenant, and thou,

Dark power, that sittest in the chair of night,
Searching the clouds for tempests with thy brand,
Proxy of Hades; list and be my witness,
And bid your phantems all, (the while I speak
What, if they but repeat in sleeping ears,
Will strike the hearer dead, and mad his soul;)
Spread wide and black and thick their cloudy wings,
Lest the appalled sky do pale to-day.
Eternal people of the lower world,
Ye citizens of Hades' capitol,
That by the rivers of remorseful tears
Sit and despair for ever;
Ye negro brothers of the deadly winds,
Ye elder souls of night, ye mighty sins,
Sceptred damnations, how may man invoke
Your darkling glories? Teach my eager soul
Fit language for your ears. Ye that have power
O'er births and swoons and deaths, the soul's attendants,
(Wont to convey her from her human home
Beyond existence, to the past or future,
To lead her through the starry-blossomed meads,
Where the young hours of morning by the lark
With earthly airs are nourished, through the groves
Of silent gloom, beneath whose breathless shades
The thousand children of Calamity
Play murtherously with men's hearts:) Oh pause,
Your universal occupations leave,

Lay down awhile the infant miseries,
That, to the empty and untenanted clay,
Ye carry from the country of the unborn;
And grant the summoned soul one moment more
To linger on the threshold of its flesh;
For I would task you.
Bear this breath of mine,
This inner Hesperus away, and bring
Another guest to its deserted home;
The mind of him whose dust is on my feet,
And let his daring spirit inhabit there
But for a passing day.
'Tis here. A wind
Is rushing through my veins, and I become
As a running water.
I see a shadowy image of myself,
Yet not my perfect self, a brother self,
That steps into my bosom. Am I born
Newly, or newly dead? I'll think a little.
Have I e'er lived before, or thought or acted?
Why no; it was the morning doze of being,
I slept content with dreams; but now I wake
And find it noon, a time for stirring deeds.
Yes, this is life that trembles in my veins,
Yes, this is courage warms my heart's full tide:
Hesperus is a man, a demon-man,
And there's a thing he lives for, shall amaze
The emulous bad powers.

Lead me on,
Mysterious guide, companion wickedness;
Olivia calls me forward, and, to reach her,
What if we tread upon a world of hearts?
Come, ye ill blasts, ye killing visitants
Of sleeping men, wild creatures of the air,
We'll walk together; come, ye beauteous snakes,
Ye lovely fanged monsters of the woods,
We'll grovel in the dust and ye shall hiss
Your tunes of murder to me.

[*An ignis fatuus rises.*

Lo, she's here
To light our sports, the Hebe of the dead,
Alecto, 'mid her nest of living hair
Bearing a star of Tartarus. Lead on. [*Exit.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.

An apartment in Orlando's palace.

HESPERUS *seated.* Attendants. *Enter to them* CLAUDIO.

Clau. THE bridegroom's here?
Attend. Yonder he sits, my lord,
And since the morn's first hour, without the motion
Even of a nerve, as he were growing marble,
Has sat and watched: the sun blazed in at noon
With light enough to blind an eagle's ken;
He felt it not, although his eyeballs glared
Horribly bright: I spoke; he heard me not;
And, when I shook his arm, slept on in thought:
I pray you try him.
Clau. Sir, good Hesperus,
I wait at your desire; we are to end
Our match at tennis. Will you walk with me?
Attend. Your voice is weak as silence to his sense.

Enter ORLANDO.

Orl. My brother, you must join us at the banquet;
We wait your coming long; how's this?

Attend. My lord,
Like trance has held him since the dawn of day;
He has looked down upon yon wood since then,
Speechless and still.

Enter LORD ERNEST.

L. Ern. Now health and good be here,
For I have missed my son the livelong day.
Why, what an idle loiterer thou art;
By this, your vacant sight must ache with gazing
Upon that view. Arise; I'd have you with me,
To fix upon some posy for the ring
You wed your love with. Death! Some fearful change
Is here. Speak; speak and tell me if he lives.

Attend. He does, my lord, if breathing is to live,
But in all else is like the coffined dead;
Motion and speech he lacks.

L. Ern. O heavens! Orlando,
Tell me 'tis false.

Orl. I would 'twere in my power,
But it doth seem too true.

L. Ern. Ride like the wind,
Fetch him the aid of medicine. See you not
Some vision has come to him in the night,
And stolen his eyes and ears and tongue away?

Enter OLIVIA.

Oh, you are come in time to see him die;

Look, look, Olivia, look; he knows us not;
My son, if thou dost hear me, speak one word,
And I will bless thee.

Orl. He is dumb indeed.

Oliv. Let me come near him. Dearest Hesperus,
If thou behold'st these poor unbeauteous cheeks,
Which first thy flattering kindness taught to blush;
Or if thou hearest a voice, that's only sweet
When it says Hesperus; oh gentle love,
Speak any thing, even that thou hatest Olivia,
And I will thank thee for't: or, if some horror
Has frozen up the fountain of thy words,
Give but a sign.

Clau. Lady, alas, 'tis vain.

Oliv. (*kneeling*) Nay, he shall speak, or I will never move,
But thus turn earth beseeching his dull hand,
And let the grass grow over me. I'll hold
A kind of converse with my raining eyes,
For if he sees not, nor doth hear, he'll know
The gentle feel of his Olivia's tears.

Clau. Sweet sir, look on her.

Orl. Brother!

Oliv. Husband!

L. Ern. Son!
Kind heaven, let him hear, though death should call him. [*Pause, a clock strikes.*

Hesp. The hour is come. [*Exit.*

SCENE II.

A room in Mordred's cottage.

FLORIBEL *alone.*

Flor. And must I wake again? Oh come to me,
Thou that with dew-cold fingers softly closest
The wearied eye; thou sweet, thou gentle power,
Soother of woe, sole friend of the oppressed,
I long to lay me on thy peaceful breast.
But once I saw thee, beautiful as moonlight,
Upon a baby's lips, and thou didst kiss them,
Lingering and oft,
(As a wild bee doth kiss a rifled flower,
And clips its waist, and drops a little tear,
Remorsefully enamoured of his prey;)
Come so to me, sweet death, and I will wreath thee
An amorous chaplet for thy paly brows;
And, on an odoured bank of wan white buds,
In thy fair arms
I'll lie, and taste thy cool delicious breath,
And sleep, and sleep, and sleep.

Enter LENORA.

O here, good mother,
We'll talk together.

Len. What; of Hesperus?
Methinks he has grown cold.
Flor. Oh no; he is
More full of courtship than he ever was;
Don't think him cold, dear mother, or I may:
I'm sure he loves me still; I'll go to him,
'Tis nigh the appointed hour.
Len. My child, it is a chill and gloomy evening,
So go not out. Thy Hesperus will come,
And thou wilt live on every word of his
Till thine eyes sparkle. What means this despondence?
Flor. Dear mother, I will strive to be at ease,
If you desire; but melancholy thoughts
Are poor dissemblers. How I wish we owned
The wealth we've lost.
Len. Why girl, I never heard
One such regret escape your lips before;
Has not your Hesperus enough?
Flor. Too much;
If he were even poorer than ourselves,
I'd almost love him better. For, methinks,
It seemed a covetous spirit urged me on,
Craving to be received his bride. I hope
He did not think so; if he does, I'll tell him
I will not share his wealth, but dwell with you.
O that he'd come! How each dull moment drags
Its lazy wing along when he is absent.

When was he here?

Len. Last night.

Flor. Last night? Now pr'ythee
Don't jeer me so, I'm sure, not many days;
But all is night when he's not here to light me,
So let it be last night; although that night
Had days for hours, yet in Love's book and mine
'Tis but an empty cypher, a black round.
Oh, I've not lived, I've not been Floribel
Since the last mellow echo of his voice
Lent the air music; is't not a sweet voice?
What can you liken to it?

Len. Pan's honeycomb
Of many vocal cells.

Flor. How dull you are;
There's nought beneath the thunder-choir so grand;
The wood-birds and the waterfalls but mock him.
He said, dear mother, I should be his countess;
To-day he'd come to fetch me, but with day
I've laid my expectation in its grave.
Dost think he will deceive me? Silly girl,
Querulous ingrate, why do I torment me?
Sweet mother, comfort.

Len. Be you sure he'll come
With his whole princely train of friends and kindred,
And he will lift thee to his gorgeous car,
And place thee at his side, a happy wife.

Flor. Fie! you cajole me, like a sulky child,

With gilded cars; but oh! I wish 'twere here.
How gloomily the clouds look, and the wind
Rattles among the brown leaves dolefully;
He will be very chill, heap up the fire.
Hush! hark! What's that?

Len. Only your dear father
Heavily breathing in his sleep; he'll wake
With his sad smile upon his patient face
Looking so dear in sickness.

Flor. But 'twill cure him,
When he knows all and sees my bridegroom with me,
I know it will: and there's the horse's step,
I'll just run out, it is not cold at all.—

Len. Go, my love,
But you must come to ask your father's blessing,
And bring your Hesperus with you.

Flor. That I will.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

A wood.

Enter HUBERT *and a* Huntsman.

Hub. No answer to our shouts but mocking echo?
Where are our fellow huntsmen? Why, they vanished
Like mist before the sun, and left us here
Lost in the briary mazes.

Hunts. Shame on the rogue,
For this their treatment. But look upwards, Hubert,
See what a mighty storm hangs right above us.

Hub. The day is in its shroud while yet an infant;
And Night with giant strides stalks o'er the world,
Like a swart Cyclops, on its hideous front
One round, red, thunder-swollen eye ablaze.

Hunts. Now mercy save the peril-stricken man,
Who 'mongst his shattered canvas sits aghast
On the last sinking plank alone, and sees
The congregated monsters of the deep
For his dead messmates warring all, save one
That leers upon him with a ravenous gaze,
And whets its iron tusks just at his feet:
Yet little heeds his wide and tearless eye
That, or the thunder of the mountain flood
Which Destiny commissions with his doom;
Where the wild waters rush against the sky,
Far o'er the desolate plain, his star of hope
In mockery gleams, while Death is at his side.

[*lightning.*

Hub. That flash hath rent the heavens; this way
for shelter.

Hunts. Some steps above there stands a noble oak,
That from the sun roofs ever-during night
With its thickwoven firmament of leaves:
Thither betake we. [*Exeunt.*

Enter FLORIBEL.

Flor. Hence did I seem to hear a human voice,
Yet there is nought, save a low moaning sound,
As if the spirits of the earth and air
Were holding sad and ominous discourse.
And much I fear me I have lost my path;
Oh how these brambles tear; here 'twixt the willows;
Ha! something stirs; my silly prattling nurse
Says that fierce shaggy wolves inhabit here,
And 'tis in sooth a dread and lonely place;
There, there again; a rustling in the leaves.

Enter HESPERUS.

'Tis he at last; why dost thou turn away
And lock thy bosom from my first embrace?
I am so tired and frightened; but thou'rt here;
I knew thou wouldst be faithful to thy promise,
And claim me openly. Speak, let me hear thy voice,
Tell me the joyful news.

Hesp. Aye, I am come
In all my solemn pomp; Darkness and Fear,
And the great Tempest in his midnight car,
The sword of lightning girt across his thigh,
And the whole dæmon brood of night, blind Fog
And withering Blight, all these are my retainers;
How: not one smile for all this bravery?
What think you of my minstrels, the hoarse winds,

Thunder, and tuneful Discord? Hark, they play.
Well piped, methinks; somewhat too rough, perhaps.

Flor. I know you practise on my silliness,
Else I might well be scared. But leave this mirth,
Or I must weep.

Hesp. 'Twill serve to fill the goblets
For our carousal; but we loiter here,
The bridemaids are without; well-picked thou'lt say,
Wan ghosts of woe-begone, self-slaughtered damsels
In their best winding sheets; start not, I bid them wipe
Their gory bosoms; they'll look wondrous comely;
Our link-boy, Will o' the Wisp, is waiting too
To light us to our grave——bridal I mean.

Flor. Ha! how my veins are chilled—why, Hesperus!

Hesp. What hero of thy dreams art calling, girl?
Look in my face—Is't mortal? Dost thou think
The voice that calls thee is not of a mouth
Long choaked with dust? What, though I have assumed
This garb of flesh, and with it the affections,
The thoughts of weakness and mortality?
'Twas but for thee; and now thou art my bride;
Lift up thine eyes and smile—the bride of Death.

Flor. Hold, hold. My thoughts are wildered. Is my fancy
The churlish framer of these fearful words,
Or do I live indeed to such a fate?

Oh! no, I recollect; I have not waked
Since Hesperus left me in the twilight bower.
Hesp. Come, we'll to our chamber,
The cypress shade hangs o'er our stony couch,
A goodly canopy; be mad and merry;
There'll be a jovial feast among the worms.
Fiends, strew your fiercest fire about my heart, [*aside.*
Or she will melt it.
Flor. Oh, that look of fury!
What's this about my eyes? ah! deadly night,
No light, no hope, no help.
Hesp. What! Darest thou tremble
Under thy husband's arm, darest think of fear?
Dost dread me, me?
Flor. I know not what to dread,
Nor what to hope; all's horrible and doubtful;
And coldness creeps—
Hesp. She swoons, poor girl, she swoons.
And, treacherous dæmons, ye've allowed a drop
To linger in my eyes. Out, out for ever.
I'm fierce again. Now shall I slay the victim
As she lies senseless? ah! she wakes; cheer up,
'Twas but a jest.
Flor. A dread and cruel one;
But I'll forgive you, if you will be kind;
And yet 'twas frightful.
Hesp. Why, 'twere most unseemly
For one marked for the grave to laugh too loud.

Flor. Alas! he raves again. Sweetest, what mean you
By these strange words?

Hesp. What mean I? Death and murder,
Darkness and misery. To thy prayers and shrift;
Earth gives thee back; thy God hath sent me for thee;
Repent and die.

Flor. Oh, if thou willest it, love,
If thou but speak it with thy natural voice,
And smile upon me; I'll not think it pain,
But cheerfully I'll seek me out a grave,
And sleep as sweetly as on Hesperus' breast.
He will not smile, he will not listen to me.
Why dost thou thrust thy fingers in thy bosom?
Oh search it, search it; see if there remain
One little remnant of thy former love,
To dry my tears with.

Hesp. Well, speak on; and then,
When thou hast done thy tale, I will but kill thee.
Come tell me all my vows, how they are broken,
Say that my love was feigned, and black deceit;
Pour out thy bitterest, till untamed wrath
Melt all his chains off with his fiery breath,
And rush a-hungering out.

Flor. Oh piteous heavens!
I see it now, some wild and poisonous creature
Hath wounded him, and with contagious fang
Planted this fury in his veins. He hides

The mangled fingers; dearest, trust them to me,
I'll suck the madness out of every pore,
So as I drink it boiling from thy wound
Death will be pleasant. Let me have the hand,
And I will treat it like another heart.

Hesp. Here 'tis then;
[*stabs her.*

Shall I thrust deeper yet?

Flor. Quite through my soul,—
That all my senses, deadened at the blow,
May never know the giver. Oh, my love,
Some spirit in thy sleep hath stolen thy body
And filled it to the brim with cruelty.
Farewell! and may no busy deathful tongue
Whisper this horror in thy waking ears,
Lest some dread desperate sorrow urge thy soul
To deeds of wickedness. Whose kiss is that?
His lips are ice. Oh my loved Hesperus,
Help! [*Dies.*

Hesp. What a shriek was that; it flew to heaven,
And hymning angels took it for their own.
Dead art thou, Floribel; fair, painted earth,
And no warm breath shall ever more disport
Between those rubious lips: no, they have quaffed
Life to the dregs, and found death at the bottom,
The sugar of the draught. All cold and still;
Her very tresses stiffen in the air.
Look, what a face: had our first mother worn

But half such beauty, when the serpent came,
His heart, all malice, would have turned to love.
No hand but this, which I do think was once
Cain, the arch-murtherer's, could have acted it.
And I must hide these sweets, not in my bosom;
In the foul earth. She shudders at my grasp;
Just so she laid her head across my bosom
When first—oh villain! which way lies the grave?
[*Exit.*

Enter HUBERT *and a* Huntsman.

Hub. It is a fearful and tempestuous time:
The concave firmament, the angel's bridge
O'er the world's day and night, is visibly
Bowed down and bent beneath its load of thunder;
And through the fiery fissures of the clouds
Glistens the warfare of armed elements,
Bellowing defiance in earth's stunned ear,
And setting midnight on the throne of day.

Hunts. The roar has ceased; the hush of intercalm
'Numbs with its leaden finger Echo's lips,
And angry spirits in mid havoc pause,
Premeditating ruin in their silence.

Hub. Hard by should stand a lone and tattered shed,
Where some tired woodsman may by chance be stretched,
Watching his scanty food among the coals;
There may we chafe our drenched and chilly limbs.

Hunts. The forest has more tenants than I knew:
Look underneath this branch; seest thou not yonder,
Amongst the brushwood and the briary weeds,
A man at work?

Hub. My life upon't some miser,
Who in the secret hour creeps to his hoard,
And, kneeling at the altar of his love,
Worships that yellow devil, gold.

Hunts. 'Tis buried;
And now he stamps the sod down, that no light
May spy his mistress; with what a doleful look
He marks its grave, and backward walks away,
As if he left his all of sight behind.

Hub. Let us steal towards it; I would have a peep
Upon this hidden jewel. [*Exeunt.*

Enter HESPEROS.

Hesp. Shall I turn back and try to thrust my soul
In at her lips, and so re-animate
The beauteous casket while this body dies?
I cannot:—not the universe of breath
Could give those little lips their life again.
I've huddled her into the wormy earth,
And left the guilty dagger at her side.
Dead Innocence! and must unkindly thistles,
And rank thick hemlock, force their bristling roots
Into thy lovely breast? Fool! Is't not done?
Why stand I tampering midst the listening winds?

My fears are lying traitors. [*Bells at a distance.*
Wedding bells,
Thanks for your merry voices; ye have waked
A sudden hurry round about my heart,
I'll think it joy. Now for my second bride. [*Exit.*

SCENE IV.

A saloon in Orlando's palace.

OLIVIA, VIOLETTA, Nurse, *and* Attendants.

Oliv. You keep me long: am I not yet attired?
Have ye not tricked me out enough? In faith,
I am so vain to think I need no more.
Attend. One moment, madam;
This little necklace, like the marriage yoke
Pleasantly binding, I must clasp around you.
Oliv. A pretty toy, and prettily disposed;
I have, I know not why, this livelong day
Wept drops enough to bead a thousand such.
Where's Violetta? Come, look up, my girl,
Make thine eyes sparkle; mine are very moist.
Viol. Shake off this sadness, lady, 'tis not meet
At such a moment; think upon your bridegroom,
How his affections seek thee.
Oliv. Gentle maid,
I'll not be sad; yet, little Violet,

How long I've worn thy beauty next my heart,
Aye, in my very thoughts, where thou hast shed
Perpetual summer: how long shared thy being:
Like two leaves of a bud, we've grown together,
And needs must bleed at parting.

Viol. No, not so;
I am thy handmaid still; and when your lord
Is absent, as he will be, at the tourney,
The court, or camp, we'll drive the long hours on
With prattle as of old.

Oliv. Thanks, I'll be cheerful;
But joy's a plant the showers of many sorrows
Must water, ere it bloom. Good nurse, your pardon,
You've known me for a froward child before.

Nurse. Now, on the scanty remnant of my life,
Grief's an ill wedding garment; if you'd put
One of your rosy smiles on, what a grace
You'd look and be. Why, all these ohs and sobs
Are more like funeral noises.

Oliv. 'Troth they are,
And 'tis the funeral of that Olivia
You nursed and knew; an hour and she's no more,
No more the mistress of her own resolves,
The free partaker of earth's airs and pleasures;
My very love, the poorest gift I have,
(Which, light as 'tis, I thought you all did prize,)
Is not my own. We must be strangers, girls;
Give me your hands and wishes.

Nurse. There is one,
Old now, and withered, truly we might call it
Yours, and not mine; oft has it brought you food,
Led you, and served you; yet in gladness parts
To make way for a younger and a worthier.

Oliv. My kind old nurse; nay, now you are forgetting
Your words of cheer; this hand shall never want
Aid while I live, your service will be needful;
My house would seem a strange and dismal place
Without your pleasant looks.

Nurse. Well, my dear child,
I hope you'll give my arms a new Olivia;
Blush not; the old will talk.

Oliv. Whose hand is this
I know not from my own? Young Violet's?
My beauteous innocence, you must be with me
Oft, as you said: Go to, my nurse forbids
Our weeping.

Viol. Don't chide me then, Olivia,
I'm a sad fool, but do not chide.

Oliv. A gem
For Friendship's crown, each drop. My loving maids,
To each a farewell that I cannot speak;
All have my heart, and well can read its meaning.
Henceforth I'll look upon my maiden years
As lovely pastoral pictures; all of you
Shall smile again 'neath Memory's wizard pencil;
The natural beauties that we've marked together

Will look you back again; the books we've loved
Will talk to me of your sweet-worded praises,
The air of our old haunts whisper your voices;
Trust me, I'll not forget you.
Attend. Dearest lady,
May all the blessings that rain down from heaven
Upon the marriage-bed, descend on yours;
May many children, innocent and fair,
With soft embracements throng about your knees,
Domestic pleasures ever turn your hour-glass,
And, when the long sleep falls upon your eyes,
Content and holy Peace, the twins of Eden,
Draw round the curtain 'twixt you and the world,
And watch beside you all the dreary night.

SCENE V.

A room in Mordred's cottage.

Enter LENORA *supporting* MORDRED.

Mor. Here let me rest, in my old oaken chair:
My limbs grow faint, and yet, kind, careful nurse,
Your smiles have chased away my pains.
Len. Dear husband,
A thousand thanks for those delightful words;
They bid me hope again and warm my heart.
Mor. It renovates the spirit thus to look,

With the clear eye of health and joyousness,
Upon the green creation. But I miss
A smile of hope, the copy of Lenora's,
That's wont to light my soul with its rich love;
Where is my peach-cheeked girl, my Floribel?

Len. She will be with us soon; before you woke,
She went to ramble underneath the boughs,
And feed her forest birds; each bower she knows
Of eglantine and hawthorn; now the air
Is calm, she will return.

Mor. I hope she may;
Yet who could injure such a holy thing?
The frenzied tempest's self, had it a will,
Would leave her path secure. My dear Lenora,
There is one thing I wish to see accomplished
Before I die.

Len. What is it, love? And yet methinks 'twere fit
For me still to defer its execution,
And cheat you into living to that end.

Mor. Long have I prayed to see her beauty growing
Under some worthy husband's firm protection.

Len. What if she be already wedded?

Mor. No,
That cannot be, she would have told unto me
The first emotions of her infant love;
She never had a thought concealed from me,
Even her slightest. 'Tis impossible;
And yet you look in earnest; speak, and tell me

You only jest.

Len. I speak indeed the truth;
Perhaps I was imprudent not to tell you,
But you were very ill, and, such the match,
You could not disapprove: Young Hesperus—

Mor. Lord Ernest's son!

Len. The same.

Mor. I'm satisfied,
My wish is all fulfilled. There's not a man
Beneath the sun more noble; but his father
Was wont to be a stern imperious lord,
A scorner of the poor.

Len. He did not know it.

Mor. He knew it not! That was a sad omission,
Unworthy of a parent; we might rue it.

Len. This night our daughter's bridegroom
Comes, as his own to claim her, and, ere this,
Doubtless has told the love-tale to his father.

Mor. I wish him speedy, he shall find a welcome,
In the poor man's sole wealth, my hearty love.
Hark! There's a step.

Len. 'Tis Hesperus'; I know it.

Enter the Huntsman.

Mor. Who comes, who is it?

Len. One, whose visage wears
The darkest sadness; such a man I'd choose
For the mute herald of disaster.

Hunts. Lady,
Would that my looks could mirror to your soul
The woe, each syllable of which in speaking
Tears through my heart. Alas! your lovely daughter—

Len. What? Speak I pray thee. Has she met with aught?

Mor. Bid me die, or my fears.

Enter HUBERT *with the body of* FLORIBEL.

Hunts. Here's all that's left
Of nature's rarest work: this lifeless all.
Oh! fall some strange, unheard-of punishment
On Hesperus' head.

Mor. Hesperus, Hesperus; oh!
[*Falls back in his chair.*

Hub. Aye, 'twas his hand that wrought its passage here,
And murdered love in its most sacred temple.
[*Lenora takes the body into her lap and sits nursing it.*

Hunts. Alas! he heeds not; he is with his daughter.
Look at this other.

Hub. Oh! I cannot bear it;
Leave her, a mother's agony is holy
As nature's mysteries.

Hunts. We'll to the Duke,
And crush the viper in his nest, before
Report alarm him. Gently, gently tread

And wake not echo in this home of woe.

[*Exeunt* HUBERT *and the* Huntsman.

Len. [*Sings in a distracted manner.*

Lullaby, lullaby, sweet be thy sleep!
Thou babe of my bosom, thou babe of my love;
Close, close to my heart, dear caresser, you creep,
And kiss the fond eyelid that watches above.

One touch of those warm lips and then to bed.
Where is my child? I held her in my arms,
Her heart was beating in my bosom. Ha!
It is not she that lies upon my breast,
It is not she that whispers in my ear,
It is not she that kisses my salt cheek;
They've stolen her from my couch and left this changeling,
Men call Despair—and she it is I suckle.
I know her by her killing lips of snow,
Her watery eye-balls and her tear-swoll'n cheeks.
My Floribel! oh they have ta'en her soul
To make a second spring of it, to keep
The jarring spheres in melody. Come, husband,
We'll wander up and down this wintry world,
And, if we see a sadder sight than this,
Or hear a tale, though false, of half such horror,
We'll closely hug our bosom-griefs in transport.
Why, husband! You're asleep—you're deaf—you're dead!

I have not eyes enough to weep for both,
But I'll go steal the sleeping world's, and beg
A little dew from every sipping worm
To wet my cheeks with. [*Exit.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

An apartment in Orlando's palace.

HESPERUS *alone.*

Hesp. How now? This quaint attire of countenance,
(Well fitted by prim Conscience's old tailor,
Hypocrisy,) sits rarely, and I'm here,
The affable, good bridegroom. Wickedness,
How easy is thy lesson! Now I stand
Up to the throat in blood; from Mercy's records
For evermore my guilty name is rased.
But yesterday, oh blessed yesterday,
I was a man;
And now—I start amazed at myself.
This hand, aye this it was I gave to Sin,
His grasp hath blasted it; 'twas made for kindness,
For gentle salutation, to deal out
Merciful alms, confirm the staff of age;
To reach the crust to want, the balm to sickness,
And balsam wounds; a limb of charity.
Now the wild adder's sting, the lightning's edge,
Are blunt and tame and gentle to it. Psha!

Why then, men dread the adder and the flash;
So shall they cringe to me. A step! In haste
I've washed, and thought me spotless. Yet I fear
Mine eye is so familiarized with blood,
It doth pass o'er and disregard the stains:
That recks not. Sure I've brushed away those blushes,
And shaken hesitation from my tongue.

Enter Attendant.

Menial, you're hasty in intruding thus.
Your errand?

Attend. Lady Olivia—

Hesp. Give me thine hand. That name
Makes him my friend, who speaks it. Say't again;
Olivia, oh! how each sweet syllable
Trickles along the tongue, an honied drop
Of harmony, Olivia. I'll give all
The yellow wretchedness of human wealth
Unto the subtle artist, who shall teach
A clock to tell the seconds by that word;
So shall I drive these frightful thoughts away,
And happiness——Do I look happy, sirrah?
It matters not. Speak on.

Attend. My lord, your bride——

Hesp. Well sir, it was not I; why lookest thou so?
Beware. Why layest thine hand across thy breast?
Is there a wound on't? Say.

Attend. A wound, my lord!

I understand not——

Hesp. Fool, I know thou dost not.
(If they would find it out, why let them dig
To hell's foundations.) What! Because I fold
Mine arms like any man unhurt, unhurting,
Must every slave suppose 'tis to conceal
Some fearful witness of a deed?

Attend. I thought not
'Twould anger thee; forgive me.

Hesp. Be it so;
It was too warmly said, for, as I trust,
You could not deem your master villain; never.
Yet say it were so, I but say suppose,
That I, whose clay is kneaded up with tears,
Had murdered, as you thought, some kindred creature;
Could not I wash the tokens of my guilt
From this outside, and show a hand as clean
As he who fingers first the air?

Attend. You might,
Till heaven's justice blasted you, be hid:
But leave these strange and ugly arguments;
The very fear would scare me from your side;
So banish them.

Hesp. Ay, they are strange indeed;
But mirth, believe me, mirth. Come, tell me now,
How sits this ring? Death! are your eyes nailed there?
Ha! Does the ruby cast a sanguine shade
Across the veins?

Attend. Nought, save the splendid gem,
Amazed my sight; that's all.
Hesp. My friend, 'tis thine,
Too poor a recompense for the good tidings
Your tongue is laden with; now speak them out.
Attend. First let me bless you for your bounty, sir.
I came to call you to the wedding train,
Which waits without; such smiles, on such rare faces,
Mine eyes have never seen: the bride is there;
None but yourself is wanting to perfect
This sum of joy.
Hesp. Say I'll be there anon;
And, mark me, on thy life forget each word
I just have spoken, blot them utterly
Out of thy mind; I can reward a service.
I like thee well, my trusty, pleasant friend;
Nay, pr'ythee go, there is no need of thanks.
[*Exit* Attendant.
I'll give that fellow's blab-tongue to the worms,
He's heard too much; 'twere well to call him back,
And fasten down his memory with a dagger.
No, I'll not soil my skin again to-day;
Down, Murder, down!
These untamed passions, that I keep about me,
Will thrive on nought save blood; but they must fast,
And wear a specious tameness. My Olivia,
How my whole soul is thine,—thine and the fiends'.
[*Exit.*

SCENE II.

The interior of the Duke's palace.

Enter the DUKE, HUBERT, *and the* Huntsman.

Duke. Your tale hath stunned me with its dreadful import,
And turned my every faculty to wonder.
Hub. You cannot doubt, my liege?
Duke. Hubert, I'd give
The best part of my power for hope to whisper
A no to my conviction. Devilish villain!
Hub. Sure all good angels looked another way,
When this foul deed was done.
Duke. All ancient cruelties
Look pale to it, and merciful: henceforth
They, that would christen human fiends, must write
Hesperus, 'stead of Cain; and chiding nurses,
To still their peevish babes, shall offer them,
Not to the wolves, but him, the fiercer beast.
Hub. Oh! my good lord, even now my sight is dimmed
With the salt gush, that came between my eyes
And that which seared them: on her turfy couch,
Like one just lulled into a heavy sleep,
Smiling and calm she lay; the breath

Had not left fluttering up and down her bosom,
That, all blood-dabbled and besprent with gore,
Still held the guilty steel; the name was on it
Of the cursed owner.

Duke. Go, trusty Hubert,
Speed to Orlando's palace with my guard,
And drag the murderer here; e'en now I'll judge him:
Be diligent, put wings upon your feet;
Some vengeance will fall on us in the night,
If he remain unsentenced. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

A banqueting hall.

LORD ERNEST, ORLANDO, CLAUDIO, OLIVIA, VIOLETTA, Lords, Ladies, *and* Attendants.

L. Ern. Sit here, my daughter; sit and welcome, all;
You shall not say my Hesperus' nuptial night
Lacks its due orgies.

Clau. Look upon the bride,
How blushes open their envermeiled leaves
On her fair features.

L. Ern. Sit, I pray you, sirs,
We will have deep and jovial carousal;
Put on the smiles of joy, and think of nought
But present pleasure, we've had woes enough;

Bid 'em be merry, daughter.

Oliv. Gentlemen,
My father wills me give you all a welcome,
And, if you love or honour our poor house,
Be glad with us.

Clau. We thank your courtesy, lady, and obey.

L. Ern. Where is this dilatory bridegroom still?
He was not wont to lag; what hast thou done
To banish him, Olivia?

Oliv. Good, my lord,
I fear his heart is ill. A veil of gloom
Darkens his cheeks, an anxious watchfulness
Plays in his eyes; and, when he clasped my hand
Now in the chapel, though he smiled and whispered
Of bliss and love, an ague thrilled his veins,
And starting back he groaned.

L. Ern. Go, fetch him hither,
I warrant wine will cure him.

Attend. Here he comes.

Enter HESPERUS.

Hesp. (aside.) What's all this blaze and riot? Oh, a banquet.
They should have got me here the seven sins,
And all the evil things that haunt the world;
Then what a goodly revel would we hold;
E'en Death, while hastening to the sick man's pillow,
Should pause to listen our unhallowed talk,

And think us all the brood of Pestilence
Met in mysterious council.
Attend. Sir, your father
Has been enquiring for you, and desires
The comfort of your presence at the table.
Hesp. The comfort of my presence! Slave, thou mockest me.
Why dost thou thrust thy taper in my face?
No price is set on't.
L. Ern. Hither, Hesperus;
Thou dost not mark this company of kinsmen,
Met to congratulate you, and partake
Your gladness.
Hesp. Sirs, I thank you heartily.
(aside.) A curse upon the gaping saucy rabble;
They must stare too.
L. Ern. Come, son, and sit beside me;
They say you're ill, my boy.
Hesp. They say the truth.
L. Ern. What is your ailment?
Hesp. Life. But here is one
Born to smile misery out of the world:
Look on me, my Olivia.
Oliv. Dearest Hesperus,
Be calmer, I beseech you; all are here
My friends, and yours.
Hesp. No doubt. They drain our goblets.
A friend! What is't? A thing shall squeeze your hand,

Caress with fervent love your broidered sleeve,
And wring his mouth into a leering lie,
While his heart damns thee. One whose love's as deep
As your gold coffer. Hast a wife? They come;
Buz, buz, lie, lie, the hungry meat-flies come,
"Dear lord, sweet lord, our only gentle lord!"
Ay, thus they sugar o'er the silent dagger,
And love, and love, till they've inhelled thy soul.
Oh! when I call for friend, bring honest poison.
Put out the lights, I like the beams o' th' moon;
And tell those revellers to tope in silence.

L. Ern. You would not overcast our best-meant mirth,
Bid us sit palled, like mourners at your bridal,
And hide in night our kindly countenances?

Hesp. Ay, by my grave I would. There is on earth
One face alone, one heart, that Hesperus needs;
'Twere better all the rest were not. Olivia,
I'll tell thee how we'll 'scape these prying eyes;
We'll build a wall between us and the world,
And, in some summer wilderness of flowers,
As though but two hearts beat beneath the sun,
Consume our days of love.

L. Ern. I pray you, friends,
Excuse the wilful boy, his soul is wholly
Wrapt up in admiration of his bride:
We'll have her health; come, fill your goblets round,

The bride, Olivia.

Clau. Happiness befall her,
May she ne'er feel a woe; we drink to hor. [*Music.*

Enter HUBERT.

Hub. Hush, hush; ye ill-timed sounds, let darkness come,
And with her funeral trappings hang the walls,
Or twilight lend a weak and fitful gleam,
That you may watch each others' watery cheeks.
Oh! ladies, deck your beauties with salt diamonds,
Wail with the midnight wind, and look as sad
As if ye heard the thunder-voice of doom.

L. Ern. What art thou, fearful man?

Hub. Woe's harbinger;
I come to bid you to a funeral;
Prepare your eyes, for they must see dire vengeance
Fall on the neck of crime.

Hesp. Turn out that fellow;
I know him for a crazy marvel-monger,
A long-faced gossip, with his batch of wonders:
And now he'll tell you the most terrible news,
How many owls and ravens screeched last night,
Or how some ghost has left his marble tomb
To blab a drunken lie.

Hub. I tell a fiend
His guilt is hid no more. Ho! there, the guard:

Enter Guards.

That is your prisoner.

Hesp. You tread a scorpion:
The first that stirs brings to my sword his heart;
Ye plunge into your graves. [*The* Guards *seize him.*
Ah! Floribel;
Thou draggest my steel away, thou'st frozen me:
Girl, thou art pale.

L. Ern. How's this?
Ruffians, where do you bear my boy? Release him,
Or I'll——

Oliv. Oh! do not anger them. They're men
Who have sucked pity from their mothers' breasts,
They will not close their ears to my petition;
And, if they'll loose him, I will pray for them
While speech is mine.

L. Ern. Your swords, my friends, your swords.

Hub. Stand back, my lords; let the Duke's prisoner pass.

L. Ern. The Duke! what Duke dare seize my Hesperus?
My noble friends, my—sheath your coward swords,
And put your eyes upon the ground for fear,
Your Jove, the Duke he said;—hear ye no thunder?
But all the warriors of the universe
Shall not cow me: I'll free him; villains, back.

Hub. Oh! good old man; alas! he is a murderer.

L. Ern. A murderer! *(drops his sword.)* This is a baby's arm.

Oliv. Save him, oh save him! I am very faint.

[ORLANDO, VIOLETTA, *and* Attendants, *carry her out.*

Hesp. Hence with that voice! So shrieked—I must not think.

Hub. Look to Lord Ernest. The Duke sits in council,
Waiting your presence, lords. On, to the palace.

[*Exeunt* CLAUDIO, HUBERT, HESPERUS, Guards, Lords, *and* Ladies. *Manent* LORD ERNEST *and* Attendants.

L. Ern. Where is he? What! Ye traitors, let him pass,
Chained, guarded? By this light—gird on your swords.
My hairs are grey, but yet I've blood enough—
Did they not speak of crime? These limbs aren't mine,
But some consumptive girl's.—Ay, it was murder!
I'll see the Duke—support me to the palace.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.

A street before the ducal palace.

Two Guards *attending the body of* FLORIBEL; LENORA *hanging over it.*

1*st Guard.* 'Tis time to bear the body to the council:
The criminal is there already.

2*nd Guard.* Stay;
'Twere sacrilege to shake yon mourner off,
And she will perish in the wintry night,
If unattended: yet this poor dumb witness
Is needful at the trial. While she sleeps
With careful hands convey her to the Duke's,
And bid the women tend her.

1*st Guard.* Soft! She breaks
Her trance, and rises like a new-born thing
Fresh from the realm of spirits.

2*nd Guard.* Hush! she speaks.

Len. I dreamed, and in that visioned agony
'Twas whispered by strange voices, like the deads',
I was the mother of this Floribel,
And still a wanderer upon man's earth;
No, no, I am her ghost, shade of her essence,
Thrust into some strange shape of womanhood
Until the tomb is open. What are these?

Good sir, have you a tear to throw away,
A little sigh to spare unto the wind?
I've heard that there are hearts yet in the world,
Perhaps you have one.

1st Guard. Lady, for your sorrow
It aches most deeply.

Len. Prithee, look you here.
Cold, cold; 'tis all in vain: those lustrous eyes
Will never beam again beneath the stars;
Darkened for ever; and those wan, dead lips:
They'll put her in the earth and let the world,
The pitiless bad world, tread o'er her beauty,
While I—ye airs of heaven, why will ye feed me?
Why, ye officious ministers, bestow
The loathed blessing of a cursed existence?
There's many a one now leans upon the cheek
Of his dead spouse, a-listening for her pulse,
And hears no motion but his bursting heart;
Give him my life and bid him wipe his eyes.
Look here, look here,
I've heard them call her flower; oh! had she been
The frailest rose that whitens in the blast,
Thus bruised and rifled by a ruffian hand,
I might have kept her living in my tears
A very little while, until I die;
And then—now tell me this and I will bless thee,
Where thinkest our spirits go?

1st Guard. Madam, I know not;

Some say they hang like music in the air,
Some that they sleep in flowers of Paradise,
Some that they lie ingirt by cloudy curtains,
Or 'mong the stars.

Len. Oh! not among the stars,
For, if she's there, my sight's so dimmed with tears,
I ne'er shall find her out,
But wander through the sparkling labyrinth
Wearied, alone; oh! say not 'mong the stars.
Why do ye move her?

1st Guard. We must bear her hence
Unto the Duke.

Len. What! Is it not enough
That she is dead?

1st Guard. No hand shall offer hurt,
And in short space we'll bring her back again,
Unto your cottage.

Len. Thanks! They shall not harm her;
Soldier, I will repay this kindness nobly;
Hark you; I'm going far off, to Paradise,
And if your child, or wife, or brother's there,
I'll bring them to you in your dreams some night.
Farewell; I will go search about for Comfort,
Him, that, enrobed in mouldering cerements, sits
At the grey tombstone's head beneath the yew;
Men call him Death, but Comfort is his name.

[*Exeunt.*

Enter two Citizens.

1*st Cit.* Well met sir, come you from the trial?

2*nd Cit.* Ay;
In wonder that the stones do not come down
To crush that monster of all wickedness,
The wretched Hesperus; there he stands,
Biting his chains and writhing in his rage
Like a mad tiger.

1*st Cit.* Is he yet condemned?

2*nd Cit.* Death is the sentence.

1*st Cit.* See, the criminal
And his old father; what a sight of pity.

Enter HESPERUS *guarded,* ORLANDO, HUBERT, LORD ERNEST, *and* Mob.

Hesp. Well, gaping idiots; have ye stared enough;
Have ye yet satisfied your pious minds,
By thanking your most bounteous stars ye're not
A prodigy like this? Get home and tell
Your wives, and put me in your tales and ballads;
Get home and live.

L. Ern. Oh hush my son,
Get some good priest of Charity to draw
Tears of repentance from your soul, and wake
The sleeping virtue.

Hesp. Who's this greybeard driveller?
Go, mind your wits, old fellow, that bald skull

Is full of leaks; hence! look in last night's bowl;
Search all your money-bags: don't come abroad
Again without them; 'tis amiss.
L. Ern. Oh heavens!
Is this the son, over whose sleeping smiles
Often I bent, and, mingling with my prayers
Thanksgivings, blessed the loan of so much virtue.
Hesp. That's right; weep on, weep on; for thou art he,
Who slew his only child, his first-born child.
Orl. Oh look upon his galling agony,
These desperate yearnings of paternal love,
And try to have an heart.
Hesp. You're merry, friend;
Troth 'tis a goodly jest: what, dost thou think
These limbs, the strength of nature's armoury,
That but exist to dare, and dare the things
That make the blood of bravery turn pale
For very terror, such a minion's work,
The offspring of those dribbling veins? Go to,
Thou'rt a sad idiot.
L. Ern. Oh! hear him not, thou ever-present Justice,
And close thy watchful eyelid, thou that weighest
Th' allotted scale of crime.
Hesp. Come hither, age;
I have a whisper for your secrecy;
Consider; who am I?

L. Ern. Thou wast my son,
The pulse of my dead heart, light of my eyes,
But now——

Hesp. Thy son! I would I'd time to laugh.
No, no; attend. The night, that gave me being,
There was unearthly glee upon the winds,
There were strange gambols played beneath the moon,
The madman smiled uncouthly in his sleep,
And children shrunk aghast at goblin sights;
Then came a tap against the rattling casement,
Not the owl's wing, or struggle of the blast;
Thy dotardship snored loudly, and meanwhile
An incubus begot me.

L. Ern. Lead me home,
My eyes are dim; I cannot see the way:
I fain would sleep. [*Exit with some of the Citizens.*

Hesp. Go, some one, tell his nurse
To get him swaddling clothes.

Orl. Prodigious wretch!
Rebel to man and heaven! On thee shall fall
The cureless torture of the soul, the woe
Hell nurses for the deepest damned.

Hesp. 'Tis pity
So much good cursing should be thrown away;
Well spit, my reptile! Officers, lead on:
Shall I, in bondage, stand to glut the sight
Of these poor marvel-dealing things? Away,
I'll shut them out; the red death on you all! [*Going.*

Ah! my good fellow, are you of the train
That wait upon Olivia?

Attend. I'm her servant.

Hesp. How fares she?

Attend. Very ill; she wastes,
Careless of living.

Hesp. Tell her, on my love
I charge her live; oh heaven, *she* must not die,
There are enough accusers in the tomb.
Tell her—— Shame, shame, they shall not see me weep.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.

A room in Mordred's cottage.

The dead FLORIBEL *laid upon a couch.*
LENORA *and* Boy.

Len. Why dost thou weep, thou little churl?
Boy. Alas!
I need not say.
Len. Boy, boy; thou'rt wicked; thou wouldst have me think
I have no Floribel, but thou shalt see
How I will make her live.
It is the morning,
And she has risen to tend her favourite flowers,
And, wearied with the toil, leans o'er her seat
In silent languor. Now I will steal in,
Softly: perchance she sleeps. It's plain she hears not,
Or she would leap all-smiling to my arms;
I wish dear Mordred were awake to see
How the sweet girl will start and welcome me,
At my first speaking: but I'll wait awhile,
And save the pleasure. Ah! thou pretty silence,
I know thou'rt thinking what a happy cot

'Twill be when our loved patient is quite well.
Yes, you shall take him his first walk; he'll lean
Upon that arm, and you shall show the plants
New set in the garden, and the grassy path
Down to the church.
Now I will stand behind her,
So,—she must drop her head upon my bosom,
As she looks up. Good-morrow to thee, sweet;
Now for her gentle cry; she's turning round.
No—for she wont seem startled, but pretend
To have heard my coming. Why art thou so slow?
Sweet little wag, I know thou'rt not asleep.
Soft! 'Tis the swiftness of my thought outruns
Her proper motions. I've this instant spoken,
The air has scarcely yet ta'en up my words;
May be she hears not. But I did not speak;
'Twas only thought, or whispered. Child, good-morrow;
Yes, she hears that, but will not stir even yet.
I'll not be frightened, for she surely hears;
Though, if I had not seen her garments move,
And caught the tiny echo of her breath,
'Twere dreadful. Speak, I pray thee, Floribel,
Speak to thy mother; do but whisper "ay;"
Well, well, I will not press her; I am sure
She has the welcome news of some good fortune,
And hoards the telling till her father comes;
Perhaps she's found the fruit he coveted

Last night. Ah! she half laughed. I've guessed it then;
Come tell me, I'll be secret. Nay, if you mock me,
I must be very angry, till you speak.
Now this is silly; some of those young boys
Have dressed the cushions with her clothes in sport.
'Tis very like her. I could make this image
Act all her greetings; she shall bow her head,
"Good-morrow mother;" and her smiling face
Falls on my neck.—Oh, heaven, 'tis she indeed!
I know it all—don't tell me.

SCENE II.

The interior of a prison.

HESPERUS *alone.*

Hesp. Hark! Time's old iron voice already counts
The steps unto the after-world, o'er which
Sleep in her arms hath carried man to-night;
And all it wakes to business or to joy,
Save one; and, mingled with its solemn tone,
I heard the grating gates of hell expand——
Oh! house of agony,
I feel thy scorching flames already near.
Where shall I 'scape? Is there no hiding place?
Spirit, that guidest the sun, look round this ball,
And through the windows of deep ocean's vault;

Is there no nook just big enough for me?
Or, when I'm dead, can I not pass my soul
For common air, and shroud me in some cloud?
But then the earth will moulder, clouds evanish;
So Hell, I must unto thee, darksome vale;
For dared I hope, I could not wish, Elysium:
There should I meet the frowns of Floribel;
My father would be there:—black gulph of anguish,
Thou art far better than such paradise.
Why did they teach me there is such a place?
The pang of misery is there; I know
There is a land of bliss, and am not in it;
This, this outstings your lashes, torturers;
He has no lack of punishment who feels it.

Enter Jailor.

Oh! speak not for a moment, speak not, sir,
I know thine errand well; so tell it not.
But let me shut mine eyes, and think a little
That I am what I was. Ay, there he sits,
My good old sire, with his large eye of love.
How well it smiles upon that lovely maid,
A beauteous one, indeed; and yet, they say,
She died most cruelly. Oh! tell me something,
Drive out these dreams.

Jail. Prisoner, prepare for death. [*Exit.*

Hesp. Death! Death! What's death? I cannot think.

Enter LENORA.

Who art thou?

Len. Ha! knowest thou not the wretch thou'st made Lenora?

Alone I've found thee, villain.

Hesp. Not alone;

Oh! not alone: the world hath burst its ribs,
And let out all the demons in the pit;
Thick; thick they throng: I cannot breathe for them;
The hounds of Lucifer are feeding on me,
Yet I endure; Remorse and Conscience too,
Stirring the dying embers of my heart,
Which Passion hath burnt out, like midnight gossips
Sit idly chattering of the injured dead;
But thou'rt the last and worst; I hoped to hide
Beneath the turf from thee.

Len. Thou shalt not leave me; stand and hear my curse,—

Oh such a curse! I learned it from a voice
That wandered 'mid the damned: it burns my tongue,
Listen, wretch, listen;
Thus, thus I curse thee . . . . . No I do revoke it,
My pardon be upon you for your deeds;
Though thou didst stab me through my Floribel,
I think thou once didst love her; didst thou not?

Hesp. With my whole soul, as now I worship her.

Len. Alas! say no; I wish thou'dst break my heart;

Now, pr'ythee do; I'll bless thee for't again.

Hesp. What! is it stubborn yet? Then thou canst teach me

How to bear misery——but I need it not,
They've dug my grave.

Len. But, while you still are living,
What say you to some frolic merriment?
There are two grassy mounds beside the church,
My husband and my daughter; let us go
And sit beside them, and learn silence there;
Even with such guests we'll hold our revelry
O'er bitter recollections: there's no anguish,
No fear, no sorrow, no calamity,
In the deathful catalogue of human pains,
But we will jest upon't, and laugh and sing:
Let pitiful wretches whine for consolation,
Thank heaven we despair.

Enter Guards.

Hesp. See you these men?
They bid me to a strange solemnity.

Len. Must thou be gone?

Hesp. I must, alas! for ever.
Live and be blessed, mother of Floribel.

[*Exit with Guards.*

Len. Farewell; farewell. They drag him to the scaffold,
My son, the husband of my Floribel:

They shall not slaughter him upon the block,
And to the cursing multitude hold up
The blackened features which she loved; they shall
not. [*Exit.*

SCENE III.

An apartment in Orlando's palace.

OLIVIA, VIOLETTA, *and* Attendants.

Oliv. Sing me that strain, my gentle Violet,
Which erst we used, in sport and mockery
Of grief, beneath the willow shade at eve
To chaunt together; 'twill allay my woes.

SONG, *by two voices.*

First Voice.

Who is the baby, that doth lie
Beneath the silken canopy
Of thy blue eye?

Second.

It is young Sorrow, laid asleep
In the crystal deep.

Both.

Let us sing his lullaby,
Heigho! a sob and a sigh.

First Voice.

What sound is that, so soft, so clear,
Harmonious as a bubbled tear
Bursting, we hear?

Second.

It is young Sorrow, slumber breaking,
Suddenly awaking.

Both.

Let us sing his lullaby,
Heigho! a sob and a sigh.

Oliv. 'Tis well: you must not weep; 'twill spoil your voices,
And I shall need them soon.

Viol. For what, Olivia?
You were not wont to prize our simple skill
Erewhile so highly: what will please you most?
What lay of chivalry, or rural sport,
Or shepherd love, shall we prepare you next?

Oliv. My dirge: I shall not tax your music else.
It must be: wherefore weep?

Viol. I cannot help it,
When you converse so mournfully of death;
You must forgive me.

Oliv. Death! thou silly girl,
There's no such thing; 'tis but a goblin word,
Which bad men conjure from their reeking sins

To haunt their slumbers; 'tis a life indeed.
These bodies are the vile and drossy seeds,
Whence, placed again within their kindred earth,
Springs Immortality, the glorious plant
Branching above the skies. What is there here
To shrink from? Though your idle legends tell
How cruelly he treats the prostrate world;
Yet, unto me, this shadowy potentate
Comes soft and soothing as an infant's sleep,
And kisses out my being. Violetta,
Dost thou regard my wish, perhaps the last?

Viol. Oh! madam, can you doubt it? We have lived
Together ever since our little feet
Were guided on the path, and thence have shared
Habits and thoughts. Have I in all that time,
That long companionship, e'er thwarted thee?
Why dost thou ask me then? Indeed I know not
Thy wishes from my own, but to prefer them.
Then tell me what you will; if its performance
But occupy the portion of a minute,
'Twill be a happy one, for which I thank you.

Oliv. Thine hand upon it; I believe thy promise.
When I am gone you must not weep for me,
But bring your books, your paintings, and your flowers,
And sit upon my grassy monument
In the dewy twilight, when they say souls come
Walking the palpable gross world of man,
And I will waft the sweetest odours o'er you;

I'll shower down acorn-cups of spicy rain
Upon your couch, and twine the boughs above;
Then, if you sing, I'll take up Echo's part,
And from a far-off bower give back the ends
Of some remembered airy melody;
Then, if you draw, I'll breathe upon the banks
And freshen up the flowers, and send the birds,
Stammering their madrigals, across your path;
Then, if you read, I'll tune the rivulets,
I'll teach the neighbouring shrubs to fan your temples,
And drive sad thoughts and fevers from your breast;
But, if you sleep, I'll watch your truant sense,
And meet it in the fairy land of dreams
With my lap full of blessings; 'twill, methinks,
Be passing pleasant, so don't weep for me.

Viol. I fear, Olivia, I'm a selfish creature,
These tears drop not for you, but for myself;
'Tis not that death will have you, but that I
Shall be a lone lost thing without your love.

Oliv. My love will spread its wings for ever near you;
Each gentler, nobler, and diviner thought
Will be my prompting.

Viol. Well, I'll bear it then,
And even persuade myself this intercourse
Of disembodied minds is no conjecture,
No fiction of romance. The summer sun
Will find me on the sod that covers you,
Among the blossoms; I'll try not to cry;

And when I hear a rustle in the grass,
Or the soft leaves come kissing my bent arm,
I shall not lay it to the empty air,
But think I know thy utterance in the noises
That answer me, and see thy rosy fingers
Dimpling the brooks.

Oliv. Thou wilt be cheerful, then?

Viol. Yes, with this hope,
That when, some silent, melancholy night,
I've sobbed myself to sleep over your picture,
Or some memorial of your former kindness,
I shall awaken to etnereal music,
And find myself a spirit with Olivia. [*A bell tolls.*

Oliv. Whose summons loads the gale with mournful sound?

Attend. Dear lady?

Oliv. I ask who's dead or who's to die:
You need not tell me: I remember now,—
It was a thought I wished to keep away.
My love, my Hesperus, unto me thou wert
The gentlest and the kindest; sudden madness
Must have inspired this deed; and why do I,
Wife of the dying, tarry in the world?
I feel already dissolution's work;
A languor creeps through all my torpid veins;
Support me, maidens.

Viol. Come unto your couch;
Sleep will recruit thee.

Oliv. Yes; the breathless sleep;
Come and pray round me, as I fade away;
My life already oozes from my lips,
And with that bell's last sound I shall expire.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.

The place of Execution.

HESPERUS *guarded*, HUBERT, ORLANDO, Citizens, *&c.*

Hesp. Now in the scornful silence of your features
I see my hated self; my friends, I was
The pestilence you think of; but to-night
Angelic ministers have been with me,
And by the holy communings of conscience
Wrought a most blessed change; my soul has wept
And lain among the thorns of penitence;
I ask, (and you will not refuse the boon
To one who cannot crave again) forgiveness
For all that in the noontide of my crimes,
Against you, even in thought, I have committed.

Orl. And we rejoice to grant it; and if prayers,
In meek sincerity outpoured, avail,
You have them from our hearts.

Hesp. Thy sister's soul spake in those words, Orlando;

A wretch's blessing for them. I'm as one
In some lone watch-tower on the deep, awakened
From soothing visions of the home he loves;
Trembling he hears the wrathful billows whoop,
And feels the little chamber of his life
Torn from its vale of clouds, and, as it falls,
In his midway to fate, beholds the gleam
Of blazing ships, some swallowed by the waves,
Some, pregnant with mock thunder, tossed abroad,
With mangled carcases, among the winds;
And the black sepulchre of ocean, choaked
With multitudinous dead; then shrinks from pangs,
Unknown but destined. All I know of death
Is, that 'twill come. I have seen many die
Upon the battle field, and watched their lips
At the final breath, pausing in doubt to hear
If they were gone. I have marked oftentimes
Their pale eyes fading in the last blue twilight;
But none could speak the burning agony,
None told his feelings. I ne'er dreamed I died,
Else might I guess the torture that attends it.
But men unhurt have lost their several senses,
Grown deaf, and blind, and dumb without a pang,
And surely these are members of the soul,
And, when they fail, man tastes a partial death:
Besides our minds share not corporeal sleep,
But go among the past and future, or perhaps
Inspire another in some waking world,

And there's another death.
I will not fear; why do ye linger, guards?
I've flung my doubts away; my blood grows wild.
Hub. The hour appointed is not yet arrived,
Some moments we must wait; I pray you, patience.

Enter LORD ERNEST *in the dress of a peasant, followed by* CLAUDIO.

Clau. My lord, where dost thou hurry?
L. Ern. To Despair;
Away! I know thee not. Henceforth I'll live
Those bitter days that Providence decrees me,
In toil and poverty. Oh son, loved son,
I come to give thee my last tear and blessing;
Thou wilt not curse the old, sad wretch again?
Hesp. (Falling upon the ground and covering himself with the loose earth.)
Oh trample me to dust.
L. Ern. (Lying down beside him)
My own dear child;
Ay, we will lie thus sweetly in the grave,
(The wind will not awake us, nor the rain,)
Thou and thy mother and myself; but I,
Alas! I have some tearful years to come,
Without a son to weep along with me.
Hesp. Father, dear father!
And wilt thou pray for me? Oh, no! thou canst not,
Thou must forget or hate me.

L. Ern. Sirs, have pity;
Let him not use me thus. Hesperus, Hesperus,
Thou'rt going to thy mother; tell her, son,
My heart will soon be broken; so prepare
To have me with you. Bless thee, boy, good night.
[*Exit.*

Hesp. My father, heaven will curse thee if I bless;
But I shall die the better for this meeting. [*Kneeling.*
Oh, Floribel! fair martyr of my fury,
Oh, thou blessed saint! look down and see thy vengeance,
And, if thy injured nature still can pity,
Whisper some comfort to my soul. 'Tis done;
I feel an airy kiss upon my cheek;
It is her breath; she hears me; she descends;
Her spirit is around me. Now I'll die.

Enter LENORA.

Len. Where's Hesperus? Not gone? Speak to me loud,
I hear not for the beating of my heart.
We're not both dead? Say thou hast 'scaped the headsman,
Nor felt the severing steel fall through thy neck.

Hesp. I stay one moment for the signal here,
The next I am no more.

Len. Then we have conquered.
Friend, leave us: I would speak a private word

Unto thy prisoner. Look upon these flowers;
They grew upon the grave of Floribel,
And, when I pulled them, through their tendrils blew
A sweet soft music, like an angel's voice.
Ah! there's her eye's dear blue; the blushing down
Of her ripe cheek in yonder rose; and there
In that pale bud, the blossom of her brow,
Her pitiful round tear; here are all colours
That bloomed the fairest in her heavenly face;
Is't not her breath?

Hesp. (smelling them.) It falls upon my soul
Like an unearthly sense.

Len. And so it should,
For it is Death thou'st quaffed:
*I steeped the plants in a magician's potion,
More deadly than the scum of Pluto's pool,
Or the infernal brewage that goes round
From lip to lip at wizards' mysteries;
One drop of it, poured in a city conduit,
Would ravage wider than a year of plague;
It brings death swifter than the lightning shaft.

Hesp. 'Tis true: I feel it gnawing at my heart,
And my veins boil as though with molten lead.
How shall I thank thee for this last, best gift?

Len. What is it rushes burning through my mouth?
Oh! my heart's melted.—Let me sit awhile.

* The reader will recollect Massinger's "Duke of Milan."

Hub. Hear ye the chime? Prisoner, we must be gone;
Already should the sentence be performed.

Hesp. On! I am past your power.
(To Lenora.) How farest thou now?

Len. Oh! come with me, and view
These banks of stars, these rainbow-girt pavilions,
These rivulets of music—hark, hark, hark!
And here are winged maidens floating round,
With smiles and welcomes; this bright beaming seraph
I should remember; is it not——my daughter?
[*Dies.*

Hesp. I see not those; but the whole earth's in motion;
I cannot stem the billows; now they roll:
And what's this deluge? Ah! Infernal flames!
[*Falls.*

Hub. Guards, lift him up.

Hesp. The bloody hunters and their dogs! Avaunt—
Tread down these serpents' heads. Come hither, Murder;
Why dost thou growl at me? Ungrateful hound!
Not know thy master? Tear him off! Help! Mercy!
Down with your fiery fangs!—I'm not dead yet.
[*Dies.*

THE END.

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